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On earth, peace

Peace on earth.

Three magic words.

But what do we say when we say: "Peace on earth"?

Christmas 1982.

Some heads will bow deeply and muffled voices will cry: "O God, give peace on earth." God hears them in their prison cells.

Some quivering voices will say as a testimony of whispering hope: "Peace on earth. May it come ... soon ..."

Some mighty leaders, politicians, will assure us: "Peace on earth is our business." Never mind the nuclear arms race.

Others again will smile wryly as they sneer sarcastically: "Peace on earth - how naive are you? Come on, smarten up!"

Peace on earth.

Three magic words.

From where do they come to us?

They came from the night when stars were bright.

They came from hills where shepherds watched their flocks.

They came from a song from the mouth of angels.

And - strange enough - those angels were not just praying for peace or hoping for peace; they were not even working for peace - they were *celebrating* peace for they were messengers of "good news of great joy."

Those angels that night celebrated the fact that a child had been born, a child with the name *Prince of Peace*.

The story of his life would be told in these words: "He is our Peace."

This had never happened before in human history.

But why did it happen and what does it mean?

Scholars and poets have tried to understand the news and the joy of this child.

The interpretations are many.

Some say: peace is just an inner feeling of contentment.

Others: it is between God and the individual soul.

Others again: it is the presence of God, not the absence of war.

All this makes me wonder whether we do justice to the song of the angels.

They sang when God turned the page from the Old Testament to the New.

They sang of *shalom* and *irene*

Shalom means healing, feeling well, being well, doing well.

The child would give us life and life-to-the-full.

His *shalom* would be our *irene*, our peace, which means:

This child will give a new situation by means of a radical change and renewal.

Where this child would live and die walls of partition would come down, Chinese walls and Berlin walls, the split between Jews and Gentiles, between East and West, North and South. There would be no more: Barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but it would be: Christ is all, and is in all.

Why? Because this child would also break down the wall of partition between

God and man, God and His people, the faithful Father and his faithless kids.

Now, listen to me.

What do we celebrate this Christmas?

Please, don't make your Christmas too small.

Do not celebrate only a feeling or just inner peace.

Celebrate the presence of God; yes, even in our war-torn world.

Celebrate the presence of God in Jesus Christ His Son, which means forgiveness and covenant partnership.

Have a festival dinner. Celebrate! Join the angels in celebrating facts, real happenings, history.

And because of that history your calling is great, even today.

God not only wants you to receive peace.

God wants you to help Him in making peace.

God also wants to help you in making peace.

Peace on earth is by no means a lost cause, for it is the cause of the Child born in Bethlehem:

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Amen.

Rem Kooistra

Dr. Rem Kooistra, although officially retired as Campus Minister, is still actively involved in work at the University of Waterloo.

Ontario Government and ICS reach understanding

Bert Witvoet

Representatives from The Institute for Christian Studies met with Dr. Bette Stephenson, Minister of Colleges and Universities, Wednesday November 24, at 5 p.m. The meeting had been requested by the Institute to discuss ICS objections to implications of Bill 137, a bill that seeks to regulate the granting of degrees.

A positive spirit prevailed at the meeting and the Institute and government agreed that the Institute should be allowed to grant a degree title that reflects its curriculum in philosophical studies.

Spokesperson for the ICS team, Dr. C.T. McIntire presented the position of the Institute, which by this time has become quite familiar to the Minister. He and Gerald Vandezande described what transpired at the meeting.

"Dr. Stephenson indicated that she was concerned about removing the misunderstanding within the Reformed constituency regarding the government's alleged attempt to limit the Institute's charter to theological studies. 'There is no doubt in my mind,' she said, 'that academically it is well qualified and that it has strong constituency support.'

"She further went on to say that the government would like to do everything possible for the Institute so that it may continue to operate."

According to Messers McIntire and

Vandezande, Dr. Stephenson recognized that the Institute would not settle for a degree with a religious reference, and she agreed to leave out such a designation.

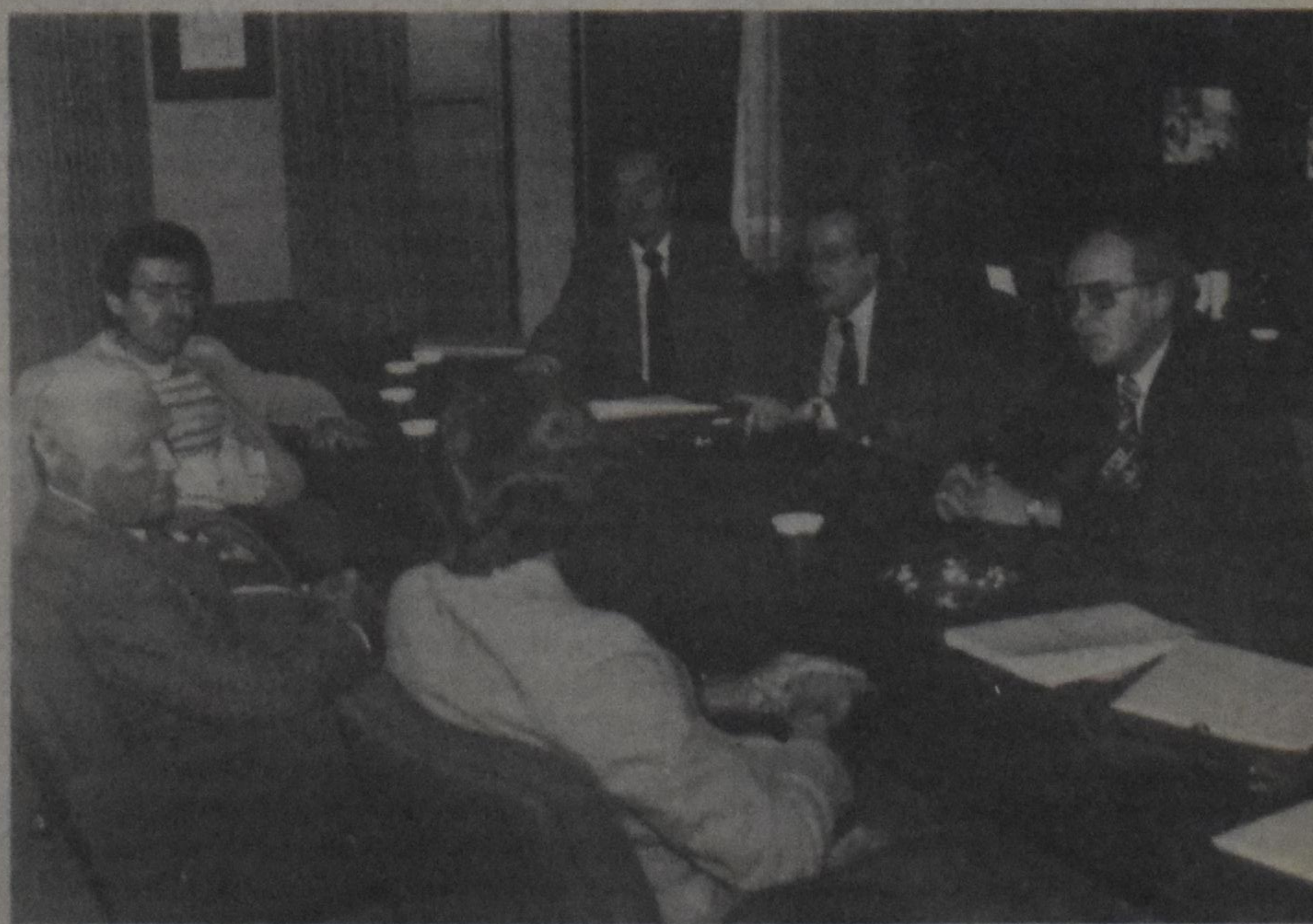
All those who were part of the ICS team concluded that this statement signalled a real breakthrough in the negotiations. For the first time the ministry had stated that a religious designation, like a Master's degree in Christian Studies, might not serve the purposes of the Institute.

There was also clarity and agreement between the government and the Institute regarding the unique character and approach of the Institute. Since studies there are done at a philosophical foundational level, the ICS can be considered to have only one faculty, unlike universities.

According to Thomas McIntire, the Minister indicated that the ICS come with a proposal for a degree that would reflect the unique character of the Institute. "Although we have made a significant turn in the road, we must not assume that we are home," said Dr. McIntire. "There are some tough negotiations ahead of us yet."

According to Mr. Vandezande, the Institute is willing to meet the Minister halfway by proposing a Master of Philosophical Studies. "This would satisfy our constituency," he felt.

The Institute team consisted of Dr. C.T. McIntire, Institute Senior Member in History; Dr. Robert VanderVennen, Executive Secretary of the AACs;



MEMBERS OF THE ICS TEAM: (clockwise starting at six o'clock) Dr. C.T. McIntire, Dr. Lawrence Lynch, Mr. Malcolm MacCrury, Dr. Robert VanderVennen, Dr. Abraham Rotstein and Mr. Gerald Vandezande

Dr. Lawrence Lynch, Member of the Institute Board of Curators and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Toronto; Dr. Abraham Rotstein, Institute Advisor for University Affairs and Professor of Political Economy at the University of Toronto; Mr. Gerald Vandezande, Political Consultant for the Institute and Director of Citizens for Public Justice; and Mr. Malcolm MacCrury, Junior Member at the Institute.

According to C.T. McIntire, it was quite obvious that the groundswell of support expressed in many letters written by the AACs constituency as well as by church leaders and friends of the Institute made a deep impression on the Conservative government.

Mr. Vandezande remarked that Thomas McIntire has carried himself well at the meeting. "His stubbornness showed that he was well on the way to becoming a true Dutchman."

Viewpoint

Reader's Digest Bible a shortcut to salvation?

Instant coffee. Instant pictures. Instant soup. Instant biblical knowledge. That seemed to be the reasoning behind the publication a while back of the *Reader's Digest Bible*.

Reader's Digest is known for its remarkable ability to reduce bestsellers into Sunday afternoon quick reading. It must have seemed linguistically logical to then condense the Bible into half its length, without harming the "plot."

When one reads the condensed version, one cannot but constantly wonder just which portions of Scripture are missing. The *Reader's Digest Bible* avoids using chapters and verses, and that makes it even more difficult to compare with the "real" text.

The Bible was wholly inspired: which stories, which verses, which entire books of the Bible would you eliminate if you were given the task of cutting the Bible in half?

The difficulty lies in the fact that the Bible is not one book; it is 66. Each



Keith Knight

Editorial

book is different, yet each is related. There is history, poetry and prophecy. There are different authors writing in different periods in history and all of them combined tell the amazing story of salvation.

Does the *RD Bible* have any merit? It may open the reader's eyes to the beauty of Scripture. It would certainly not lead anyone away from Christ. Its weakness lies in its incompleteness. The *RD* version would not be suitable for serious Bible study. It could serve only as a window to the entire, complete Bible.

Those who would look to the *RD* version for immediate knowledge into God's Word and will, will be sadly disappointed. You cannot come to know God by instant immersion. It takes a long time of searching the Scriptures to come to understand God's will for our lives. We often refer to that process as being nurtured in the Lord.

Even though the *Reader's Digest Bible* is condensed, it still makes for a lot of difficult reading. You cannot simplify Revelation. You cannot spruce up Leviticus to make it lighter reading. A list of rules is a list of rules. You cannot make the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1) sound like poetry.

The *RD* version makes for interesting reading but one would cringe at the thought of seeing a parishioner carry a copy into church.

I would suspect that the *RD* version will end up on some coffee tables in doctor's offices and hospital waiting rooms, just as the parent *Reader's Digest* has done for decades. And it may be beneficial to breeze through

the condensed version of Daniel or Acts while you are waiting for your doctor's appointment. It would certainly be an improvement on some of the other reading materials which often grace the magazine rack.

The *RD* version should not be seen as a threat to the church or to the church's outreach. No synod or assembly will ever adopt it as an approved biblical version. Nor did *Reader's Digest* intend it as such. The Bible is the best read book in the world. The *Reader's Digest* company simply attempted to capture the essence of the Bible in condensed form.

Reading the *RD* version could be compared to shopping. You catch glimpses of God's Word but you don't really know its contents until you step inside. It is only then that you discover the richness of the contents and the "price" of salvation. There is no substitute for searching the complete Scriptures. There is no shortcut to knowing God. Instant salvation does not exist.

Neither poverty nor riches

Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed with the right amount intended for me: in order that being stuffed I won't deny You and say: Who is the Lord? nor also being poverty stricken, steal, and so damage the name of my God. [Proverbs 30].

In our time of global communication the miss-matched sight of poverty and riches existing side by side cannot easily be ignored. Many people are longing and working for a new social consciousness. Although some Christians have often dismissed this topic as irrelevant to spiritual matters, fewer and fewer would dare to say that today. In fact - better late than never - spokespersons within many denominations are drawing attention to the social-economic implications of the Gospel with increasing concern.

Certain is, that the Bible speaks quite clearly and often about the many facets of life; also concerning poverty and riches.

The wisdom words in Proverbs 30, referred to above, are so important because they remind us that whatever we think, say, and do about poverty and riches ... we must relate this to our first goal, our prime identification. We must find our starting point in our BELONGING TO OUR GOD.

The proverbial prayer above says it so well: the danger of riches is that I will feel self-sufficient, and will say: Why do I need God? Who is the Lord, that He can give me anything I can't already buy? And the danger of poverty is that I will think: God hasn't

Frank and Aria Sawyer

Guest editorial

helped me; let me go ahead and steal what I need (want).

Or: we don't deny God so directly, but we say: What I've worked hard for is mine. If people in other countries worked hard, they could be as well off as we are! (We heard a church elder say this once).

When we hold such an opinion, are we not forgetting that much of our prosperity is not just a result of personal hard work, but is also a result of a national prosperity which is presently out of the reach of many countries, which lack the natural resources and the technology to compete with world markets? In many countries people work as hard or harder than we, and longer, for much less. Here in Costa Rica 70% of the people earn in a week what we in North America earn in an hour.

At the same time, we may thank God for our prosperity; we may even say that prosperity is not unrelated to having been a Christianized nation. Biblical values, such as trust-worthy work, frugality, service to others,

sharing of prosperity, respect for creation, will make a difference. But we should be careful not to equate prosperity and faith, or prosperity and hard work, in a simple way. In a broken world there are too many sinful factors which disrupt life, so that the writer of Ecclesiastes can say: sometimes the righteous are rewarded as the unrighteous, and vice-versa (ch.8).

We imagine that Christians "back home" are praying: Lord, bless Latin America (and other poorer areas of the world), and give them food and some of the more necessary things of life. But do we realize that to pray this will mean that we will not be able to keep on boosting our individual and our national wealth at the cost of the poorer lands? That means: not only

rejoicing when the price of coffee, sugar, rice, and other "third world" products increases (if the higher price benefits the poor in such lands), but also finding the right channels (C.R.W.R.C., C.R.W.M.) for giving of what we have so bountifully received. Namely: food, clothing, money, personnel, ideas ... the consequences of the Gospel.

Some prayers are difficult. Blessed is the person, the congregation, the nation, who can pray: Give me neither poverty, nor riches!

Rev. Drs. Frank and Aria Sawyer are missionaries for CR World Missions, presently studying in Costa Rica.

Prayer on December 1

*Lord Jesus, who is in heaven
and no longer in a manger,
hollow is your name this time of year.
Santa Claus will come,
shopping will be done
on earth as it is planned by marketing agents.
Give us this month our monthly bread.
And forgive us our Christmasses
as we forgive those who Christmas against us.
And lead us not into wild office parties,
but deliver us from the superficial one.
For yours is the compassionate hand,
the festive communal meal
and the happy worship service,
every December 25.
Amen.*

Bert Witvoet



Calvinist Contact

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An exercise in Bible reading, for older people, after Christmas

The Messiah showed up in diapers: isn't that good news!

Calvin G. Seerveld

Too often, perhaps, as church we anticipate celebrating Christ's birth and then, like many fathers, tend to forget about the baby till he is a little older and more interesting. But Luke, whom God used to record Jesus' birth in detail, also carefully tells us what happened shortly after Christ's birth. We should hear what is written in Luke 2:21-28. (See coloured box).

Jews were expecting Jerusalem to be set free from Roman rule by the Messiah. The great blood-thirsty Herod, a descendent of Esau, sat on David's throne in the Holy City; it's true he had built them a temple, but he was in cahoots with the heathen foreigners. So the rabbis prayed in their synagogues for the Messiah to come, like a superhuman Angel of light! pure Divinity on horseback with an anointed scimitar -- that fat, curved sword that really mutilates a body -- to get rid of the Roman-Syrian dogs occupying their holy land! like the Maccabees had almost done. At least that's the way rabbis, high priests and especially the zealot Pharisees read the prophecies of Numbers 24, Psalm 110 and Isaiah 9. The Messiah is coming! Whoopie for the Jewish nation!

But right from the start God tried to make plain to the believing Jews that the Messiah coming was not the one of their dreams. Have you ever noticed whom the Bible says, especially the gospel of Luke, God showed himself to first in Jesus Christ? Shepherds on the night shift, wisemen in their study, a single charismatic named Simeon, and an old, God-fearing lady in the temple.

The point is not God loves working men, professors, charismatics and little old ladies more than other people. Just like it's not an important point there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the Bethlehem motel system, nor should we sentimentalize it. That was no slip-up in God's advance planning. Jesus could have been born in the Royal York Hotel if he wanted: but that's not the way God works! God slips in the back door! God appears especially to those who don't seem to be so useful in the world -- men tending animals, scholars deep in their books, solitary Spirit-filled persons, and very elderly ladies, let's say, in rest homes. God makes a point of not first appearing to the "ecclesiastic" establishment and those jockeying for cabinet posts in the Messiah's new administration coming up. God leaves cold those who practised their self-righteous routines and coveted positions of power over God's people and in the land.

And the interesting thing about what God tells us here in Luke's

careful account is that Simeon and Anna, two eyewitnesses of God's becoming flesh, got the point with an amazing, insightful swiftness and an almost incredulous excitement:

Good Lord! You mean the great Messiah is a circumcised baby [to show he is under the law for sin]! And his parents belong in the poor house [because they can't afford a lamb, just two turtledoves]! And this is the way. You are going to get the non-Jews to

for power and hypocrisy ...

This is why the prophetess Anna kept on telling people waiting for the military liberation of Jerusalem:

The Messiah is a child! The Comforter of Israel is a first-born baby boy who had to be brought back from the



Now when eight days were finished so he would be circumcised, his name "Jesus" was settled on, which had been called out by the angel even before he was conceived in the womb [cf. Luke 1:26-38].

And when the full forty days of their being purified were done, as Mosaic law prescribed it for after birth [Leviticus 12], Joseph and Mary brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just like it is prescribed in the law of the Lord:

Every first-born son is to be declared specially consecrated to the Lord [Exodus 12:1-16].

They also came to give a sacrifice which the law of the Lord prescribes -- a pair of turtledoves or two young doves [Leviticus 12:6-8].

Now it is worth noticing that a man whose name was Simeon lived in Jerusalem. This man did things right; he took hold of things without hurrying them. He was expecting the Comforter of Israel to come at any time. His life bore the mark of a sanctifying spirit; in fact, he had been told by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn't see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord.

It happened that just as the parents brought in the young child Jesus [so they could do for him what was customary by the law], Simeon came into the temple Spirit-filled. He welcomed the baby in the cradle of his arms and broke into [ecstatic] praise of God!

You have done it right now, master! Set your bondservant at ease, free in

shalom! as You said you would -- because I have seen with my own eyes! Your way of freeing captives and restoring wholeness -- smack in front of the noses of all the world's peoples! A light to enlighten non-Jews [so they can see]! A shining glory especially for Your people, Israel!

Somewhat surprised, Jesus' father and mother wondered a bit at all this talk about him. But Simeon gave them both a blessing, and then told Mary, Jesus' mother:

Look! this child here is set to be a stumbling block and a help to stand up straight for many in Israel itself too! He's going to be a confounding sign that shall be resisted! -- a scimitar shall hack its way through your very bowels too, [Oh, Maria!] -- [all this] so that the hidden, scheming plans welling up out of so many hearts will indeed be exposed ...

There was a prophetess Anna there too, a daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Aser. She was really old, [more than a hundred] -- she had lived with her husband [only] seven years after she got married and was a widow now for about 84 years. She never went far away from the temple; she served God night and day, [you could say] with periods of fasting and importunate prayer.

Now Anna happened to show up just at the time [when this was going on with Simeon]. She in turn took up praising God, and spoke about the child again and again to those who were expecting the liberation of Jerusalem ...

priests, like Moses prescribed, to be free - get it!? Thank God the Messiah stoops so utterly low to our weakness, to make us whole --

But people in Jerusalem must have thought she was a crazy old lady, because no child enters the kingdom of heaven and rules like a Messiah. The meek do not inherit the holy land! The powerless, lonely, ugly and stupid

people are not whom God wants, are they now?

That is the Good News I bring you elderly people from the gospel according to Luke, so you can hear it with your own ears and be set at ease if you repent and believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, who was born, died and was raised from the dead to set us free from our captive selves and make us whole, wholly alive, like the Lord created us to be.

I bring you the Good News of Spirit-filled Simeon -- who was not in a hurry because he expected the Lord to be returning any minute! -- Whether you are Jew or Gentile, whether you be as old as Anna, middle-aged like Simeon, or a teen-ager, the Messiah of the Lord who is now in heaven and is coming back again to this earth to stop lawlessness, wipe away tears for ever, and bring peace: that Messiah is able and willing to take whatever in your life may be as broken as Humpty Dumpty and put it back together again! One will still see the cracks, to be sure, but it is beautiful in His eye, because His mighty love shows in our patched up blemishes that say, "Thank you, Lord."

The Good News today is this: the Messiah showed up in diapers! The Holy Spirit is working here like a slight draught in the room. God the Father will come for you and for me like a thief in the night -- don't be afraid -- because the Lord God does not work with a hullabaloo, lest anyone get boastful ideas. God does things with the rejects of the earth, the castoffs of society, the forgotten ones -- that's His kind of people (cf. I Corinthians 1:18-2:5) -- in order to build them into an army of singing, praying servants (cf. Mark 10:35-45)!

I work in a Christian "university" made up of eight professors and 35 students. You can hardly become smaller and weaker than that on the North American scene without ceasing to exist as a little signpost for Christ's coming again to bring judgment and peace to scholarship. And maybe you rest on a sideline twenty miles out into the countryside hills away from Metropolitan Toronto, with little to do, it seems, of consequence. But we should be of good cheer. The Lord's strength shows up full in our weakness that responds to His love (cf. II Corinthians 12:9).

The Lord Jesus Christ says to you and to me:

Come to me all you who are hurt, distracted, and tired out, and I will give you rest by making you servants of the living God.

Amen.

Dr. Seerveld is an instructor at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto

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HOMECOMING

November 15, 1982.

Dear Mom and Dad:

This is supposed to be the time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. But it seems so childish and ridiculous to me, mom and dad! It keeps hitting me that man is past the stage where he needs the crutches of God and religion. Man isn't helpless today. He's powerful. He's free! He has really come of age. When a person really recognizes man's power and dares to accept it, whether people sing "Mary had a little lamb" or "Mary had a little boy" makes little difference; both are fairy tales we've now outgrown.

Have you ever looked, really looked at the fascinating world we live in? We have automation and mass production. We enjoy a 32-hour week, take vacations, and have freedom the likes of which, forty years ago, people were afraid to dream! Events happening on the other side of the globe are piped into our family rooms the very moment they occur. The fight against all kinds of diseases has leapfrogged. With the assistance of computers we're able to build free-standing towers 1,800 feet high. We're now able, without giving it much thought, to send men on an 85-day journey into outer space.

There is something else I marvel at, the awesome power of which comes out so clearly at this time of the year. Man is now able to motivate millions of people each year to spend millions and millions of dollars on Christmas gifts. So powerful is the apparatus which we've created that, in spite of dramatic increases in the cost of bread and milk, the threat of an energy shortage, and increasing hunger among 400 million people in the third world, the advertising machine can still sweep people along to spend more on gifts this year than last.

What a fascinating world man has made! What awesome ability he possesses. Man is the architect of this society. And he hasn't reached his limit by far. The day will soon be here when he can control life and death, bend the forces of nature to do his bidding, and no problem will be too great for him to solve.

This is why I no longer want to pretend to celebrate Christmas. And this is why I will not be home for Christmas this year.

John

Dear John:

So you've decided not to come home for Christmas this year. Your absence will be felt deeply by both your mother and myself. You are now nineteen years old, and this will then be the first Christmas without you. We still hope that you will change your mind and surprise us. You can be sure that your coming would be a delightful Christmas gift.

While your letter saddens us, I do appreciate the frankness with which you write. You know me well enough to expect some kind of response. When you were small, I often told you the story of Christ's birth. As I now think about how best to answer you, I can do no better than recount for you the Bible's account as written by Luke.

There was this Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, about whom you've read in history books. After many years of civil war he became the sole ruler of the Roman empire. He sought to unify his empire, largely around his own person. He used power, so that when he spoke, nations a thousand miles or more away trembled.

Augustus always needed money. He had to pay for his palace and his parties, for his building programs and his soldiers. What better source of money could he find than the conquered peoples? So he issued a decree that the whole world should be registered. "The empire," so it was announced to the nations, "wants a record of your name, address, occupation, property, and of the members of the family

clan. On that basis it will determine the tax you have to pay."

Caesar Augustus' decision forced a young couple to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. That the taxes he levied would reduce the amount they could give for the service of the Lord, that the woman was in no condition to make that long journey, that Bethlehem was much too crowded to give that young couple anything other than a stable reserved for animals, all that was of no concern to the empire. Taxes Augustus needed, and taxes he was going to get. Whatever that meant in injustice, suffering, and humiliation, the emperor couldn't worry about that!

But God was doing something else. Many years before, when David was king over Israel, God had made a promise. "David," he had said, "one of your sons is going to sit on your throne forever!" God had also on different occasions promised that he himself would come to his people. He started to fulfill these promises when the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, Joseph's fiancée.

The angel announced that she would be the mother of a special child, that she would become pregnant through a miracle of the Holy Spirit and that the child to be born would be the son of David, and also be the son of God. A wonderful king. And

that child would be God-in-the-flesh. So, while Caesar Augustus was taking, God was preparing to give his gift, the greatest gift of love!

Did you ever notice that contrast, John? Caesar Augustus wants; God gives. Augustus wants men's bodies and money; God wants to enrich men with the gift of love.

Caesar Augustus in his power commands, and the whole world moves. God in heaven laughs and says in effect, "You powerful fool, I will use your decree so that the special boy, David's son and my son, will be born in the city of David. My gift of love will blow your vaunted power to smithereens."

That, John, is how the great miracle happened in the stable in Bethlehem.

There Mary gave birth to the little boy, son of David, God-in-the-flesh. She washed him and wrapped him securely in cloths, so that he'd be warm and comfortable. She nursed him and laid him to sleep in a dip in the floor where the animals used to get their feed. I guess you have no idea, John, what that event means to your mother and me. It means hope, grace, forgiveness. It means that life has meaning and beauty. God loves us and we may give ourselves to him. That event, John, means everything to us!

Here I must come back to your letter. There's much in it that bothers me. You never mention sin. You never mention right or wrong. You utter not a word about love, or about what life is for. I know why you don't talk about these things. You've locked yourself into a closed universe. You allow yourself to believe that the only things which exist are those which you can hear and see and measure and touch. That's why for you there really is no sin, or right and wrong; for you there is really nothing to live and to hope for; for you there's in effect only one absolute certainty, and that's death.

Furthermore, John, you believe that modern man has become so mature that he has no need of God, perhaps you could answer a few questions I would like to put to you.

Why is the improvement which man's power has brought improvement only in terms of more cars, more food, and more time off? What's so wonderful about being caught up in a vicious circle of producing and consuming?

Furthermore, if man's power is so great, how come his marriages are more rotten than ever? Why are members of the families, with more possessions and more time off and longer vacations, more estranged from each other than they've ever been? Why do employers and employees hate each other as lustily as they've ever done before?

Again, if man's power is so great, why then, with masses of people together and all the radios and telephones and newspapers and intercoms at their disposal, are the people so desperately lonely? Why do millions cry about a lack of fellowship?

There's another question I have, John. What are people supposed to live for? What should they hope for? What should they work for? More cars and longer vacations? Bigger meals and more years in which to eat them? You haven't really asked that question, have you?

God asked just that question. He answered it too. "Man should live," he said, "for my eternal love; and he should give his love to me." For that to happen, God himself had to come into history, break into man's life, and unlock his heart. That's why, even though Caesar Augustus never invited him, and the people in

Bethlehem were unwilling to open their homes to him, he came. Jesus Christ came. Sure, he came in a peculiar form. He came as a helpless little boy, who had to be washed and cuddled, nursed and rocked to sleep. He came in such a form that when people wanted to get rid of him they could nail him to a cross. But God came. He came to forgive, to heal, to open eyes, to give people himself to live for, to give his reign of peace to work for. And don't let the form deceive you. Caesar Augustus in all his might ended up totally helpless against this little king, Jesus Christ.

An event as big and crucial as the birth of Christ, son of David and God-in-the-flesh, had to be announced. And here you see the other side of the coming of God. Shepherds in the area were suddenly flooded with the light of God's glory. The angel announces the astounding news: "Look, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Then he gave them a sign which they had to check out.

No sooner had the angel made that stunning announcement than the whole heaven burst into song, celebrating God's sovereign gift of love. "Glory to God in the highest," they sang, "and on earth peace among men with whom he is well pleased." For the announcement God employed not some advertising agency which scientifically calculated how to condition people to respond in the desired way. God used creatures who appreciate his love, who knew what he was doing, and who on seeing this gift of love spontaneously burst into song. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is well pleased."

You know how the shepherds responded. They went to Bethlehem. Checking out the sign, they found that it was true. They told their whole story to Mary, and to many, many others. Then they returned to their sheep. And as they returned, did they have the problem of not knowing what to live for? Were they sad because in all of life there was only one certainty, their death? Not at all! The Word of God says, "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."

No, John, God didn't ask the Jews or Caesar Augustus, or you and me, whether he was allowed to come into the world. He came without our permission, but he came in the power of his love. He still announces to you and me that he has come.

Now you can do one of two things. You can either lock yourself up in that closed universe of yours, and tell God that he no longer exists and that you've outgrown your need of him - but when you do that, you will, of course, have to face the consequences of that choice - or you can say, "God, since you have come, it must be that we need you. Help me to see that I need you. Break into my life with your love. For power I know; but healing, forgiveness, life-directing love, I don't know anything about that. God, break into my life, so that I may be free!"

You may object that I have ignored the awesome power that modern man has achieved. No doubt about it, John, that power is impressive. But God permitted man to build up that power so that it might be used in the service of his love.

In just a day or two your mother and I will sing again, with others who know God's love, the songs which celebrate the birth of Christ.

We'll sing the songs with joy, with conviction, and with thankful hearts.

In celebrating Jesus' birth we celebrate the birth that gave us life.

How we hope that you will yet come - and from the heart sing along with us!

With continued deep affection,

Your father.

Prepared as a sermon based on Luke 2:1-20 by Rev. J. Vos of Scarborough, ON

Community Report

A new approach to helping problem kids

Bert Witvoet

With a French name like "La Joie de Vivre" what do you expect - four non-French couples who run treatment homes for emotionally disturbed boys and girls? That's what you get when you contact this organization which has its administration in the De Vries home on Bayou Park Road, 3 miles north of Orillia.

In an interview with Tom De Vries and Ray Neuman at the De Vries home, *Calvinist Contact* learned about the fresh way four couples in four separate homes are dedicating themselves to the task of rehabilitating what has grown crooked in the lives of some young persons.

From the outside looking in, nothing extra ordinary is going on. Each home has two adults who are married to each other. Then there are perhaps six or seven children, most of them teenagers. A large family by modern Canadian standards, perhaps, but acceptable. Two or three of the kids consider the two adults their real, honest to goodness parents. The other four or five kids look upon the adults as their treatment parents. Their natural parents live somewhere else.

For the latter group of kids there was a problem at home. The parents could not cope with the rebellious child, or the child could not stand the abuse or rejection of the parents. Quite often there had been contact with the police and appearances in court. School principals could not handle the situation. The boys could have several problems, could have been involved in theft, breaking and entering, drugs and alcohol.

What often happens in difficult situations involving children, the Children's Aid Society (C.A.S.) steps in. The C.A.S. may eventually decide to place disturbed children (trouble-makers) in treatment homes.

It's through C.A.S. that Tom and Janny De Vries and Ray and Barb Neuman got started in the field of child care. Barb and Ray worked in C.A.S. group homes but decided eventually to start up their own treatment home. Tom and Janny entered the child care field in 1975, after Janny had looked after 12 foster babies.

The De Vrieses operated a general store east of Peterborough for eight years up till 1975. One day they decided to make a big shift in career and location. They moved to Orillia where they started work and training in "Big Chief", a Mennonite treatment centre for emotionally disturbed boys. Ray Neuman was the treatment director there.

Together with two families they supervise and operate four separate homes under the corporation name of "La Joie de Vivre."

Treatment homes set new patterns

A problem child can be placed in one of their homes either through the C.A.S. or the parents themselves. The child can stay for a period of 3 months, 6 months, a year or longer, however long it takes for him to get back on his feet, and however long the parents or the court decide he should stay there.

When a child comes to the home he comes under the care and supervision of the home. The treatment parents

look after food, clothing, shelter and counselling. In addition they see to it that educational needs are met, that medical problems are looked after. They take the children to church, social events, recreational activities. In short, the children become part of the family.

"The child soon finds out that the world does not rotate around him," explains Tom De Vries. "We set the rules. We are in charge of visiting privileges, even when it concerns the natural parents. Our home is neutral ground, and we place a distance between the child and his problems. For that reason we don't want kids from our own town. We want separation, new patterns.

Frustration with the old system

While listening to Tom and Ray, I soon find out that they have started something new. They talk about the old and the new system. The boys that are in the De Vries home are still under the old contract. Two of Ray and Barb's wards are under the new contract. Ray explains what the difference is and what led to the new system.

Since 1975, when the Neumans and the De Vrieses got started it was the practice to accept only those children who had been referred to them by the C.A.S. That didn't work too badly. There were some successes and some bad failures. But the situation got worse as time went by.

The frustrating part for treatment parents is that they don't get the right children for their homes, and the children cannot always stay long enough. Quite often children are shuttled between foster home and treatment home, and sometimes back to their own home. The old patterns don't have a chance of being broken.

The present economic conditions have caused even greater problems. Because of shortage of funds only the most severe cases are sent to treatment homes, only for a limited time. This makes the work extremely frustrating for the treatment parents.

"On a scale of 10," says Ray, "some of the kids receive emotional damage that brings them down to a level of minus 5. These are the only kids we get now. Perhaps we can bring them up to a level of zero, but that's all. Then they are taken away."

"We want to have that child longer. We want to see it through, until it is ready to return home."

The new set-up

Recently the "La Joie de Vivre" homes have begun to look for private placements. It started with a boy that they had for a year. He was from a middle class family. The C.A.S. decided to move the boy closer to his home. The boy said, "No way." The parents said, "No way" because both the parents and the son had established a relationship with the Neumans. The parents felt that their son should not come home before he was emotionally ready. The battle with the C.A.S. raged for three days in court. Finally the parents decided to pull the child out of C.A.S. and place him privately with "La Joie de



Taking up position in front of the De Vries "La Joie de Vivre" home on Bayou Park Road near Orillia are Tom and Janny De Vries, flanked on their right by Ray Neuman and his dog Ponch

Vivre."

"But there is an important difference between children placed by the C.A.S. and those placed privately," says Ray. "In the case of the privately placed children we have parents who care. These are the ones we would prefer to help. We can do the most for that type of child."

The way Tom and Ray see their work, they can be most effective in helping children regain their balance, if there is a caring family behind the child, and if they can keep the child long enough to break the patterns. "If a boy is brought up in a family with a solid background for the first ten years, and if he then rebels, he will come back," says Ray.

The cost of caring

"How much do you charge?" I ask Tom.

"\$44 a day. That's the normal fee that C.A.S. pays to treatment homes under contract with them. That's all inclusive: room, board, clothing, medical and dental care, recreation, transportation, etc."

"It takes two full-time parents to run a treatment home for some four or five boys. The husbands help their wives in shopping, recreational activities, counselling. They have to go to court, talk with police and principals. They have to counsel the parents and make reports. People don't believe that it is a full-time job until they do it themselves."

"But doesn't that price move your service out of reach for anyone else but the fairly rich?" I ask again.

"Yes, I suppose, although a family could be helped by relatives or the church. \$6,000 for six months is a good investment if it helps parents and a child break a destructive pattern."

Ray adds that this selectivity does not make him feel guilty. "There are x number of problems in the world. We can only effectively deal with a very

small number of them. We are not after the very rich, to help them. But if the average family cares enough, the fee is going to test their love."

Both Ray and Tom experience support from their church community. Ray and Barb are Pentecostal; and Tom and Janny, Christian Reformed. I ask Ray and Tom if anyone is jealous of the other when it comes to church involvement. Both deny any form of envy.

"My church is a bit more lively than Tom's church," smiles Ray, "and I'm very close to my pastor. But Tom's church has a lot of dedication and acceptance, and quite a bit of community activity. We support each other a lot too."

Janny, who is busy in the kitchen getting the after school snacks ready for the boys when they come home, tells me that there is no normal day in their home. Every day brings new challenges, conflicts and resolutions.

I ask Tom and Janny if the behaviour of the treatment children negatively affects their own children. At the moment only one son, Peter, 18, lives at home. A married daughter Margot and single son Paul live away from home.

The response was no, it has not hurt their children. "Our kids have seen it all," says Tom. "They see guys on drugs and in trouble with the police and it has no attraction for them. We feel that our children have become stronger and more caring persons through it all."

It takes a special kind of couple to tackle this kind of project. One of the parents whose child stayed at the De Vrieses was amazed that Tom and Janny could handle four or five problem kids when he and his wife couldn't even manage one.

And well he might be amazed. Having met only Tom, Janny and Ray, I can say with some confidence that these three people at least seem competent and strong for the job. They breathe what they would call la joie de vivre, a positive, Christian approach to their society and its problem children.

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The Brown's annual Christmas program

Mom softly played "Oh Come All Ye Faithful". I stood by the door, feeling very important as I greeted the incoming members of the small audience with a program.

It was Christmas Eve in the Brown home. Our stomachs full of one of Mom's great meals, the family began to assemble around the Christmas tree for our annual Christmas program. Mom finished the prelude on the piano and I stood before the audience in my flannel nightgown. Dad sat in his lazyboy and my two brothers and three sisters were scattered around the room.

"Welcome to the Brown's Annual Christmas Program,"

I began. "Let's start by singing song number seven."

The program began as it had for as many years as I could remember. It was a tradition. Each Christmas our family held a program in which every member participated. Even as a baby, I played the part of Jesus in the Christmas story.

After we finished the opening song, one of my sisters read the Christmas story from the Gospel of Luke. Then interspersed with Christmas carols, the musical talent in the Brown family was displayed. My Dad and two brothers sang "We Three Kings of Orient Are", two of my sisters sang "Silver Bells", and I sang "What Child is This".

The highlight of the program came when Dad read to us a story about a poor missionary family whose prospects for a lean Christmas were transformed by a large care package received on Christmas Eve. We nicknamed this story "the tear-jerker" because it always made us cry. More than once Dad had to stop reading to swallow his tears.

We enjoyed this program as a family every Christmas. When we grew older, we spent many close moments sharing praises and testimonies after the program ended. Each family member would tell what spiritual growth and blessings the previous year had brought. When our words were spent, we gathered around the dining-room table to enjoy Mom's great cinnamon bread sticks and hot chocolate.

Those few hours spent together as a family on Christmas Eve had left a mark on us all. The warmth and closeness felt around the tree those nights made us closer as a family. Today, we six children are scattered around the country and it is impossible for us to be together at Christmas. Yet through moments such as those on Christmas Eve, the love and unity planted by our parents stretches over the miles and causes us to feel close, even when we are apart.



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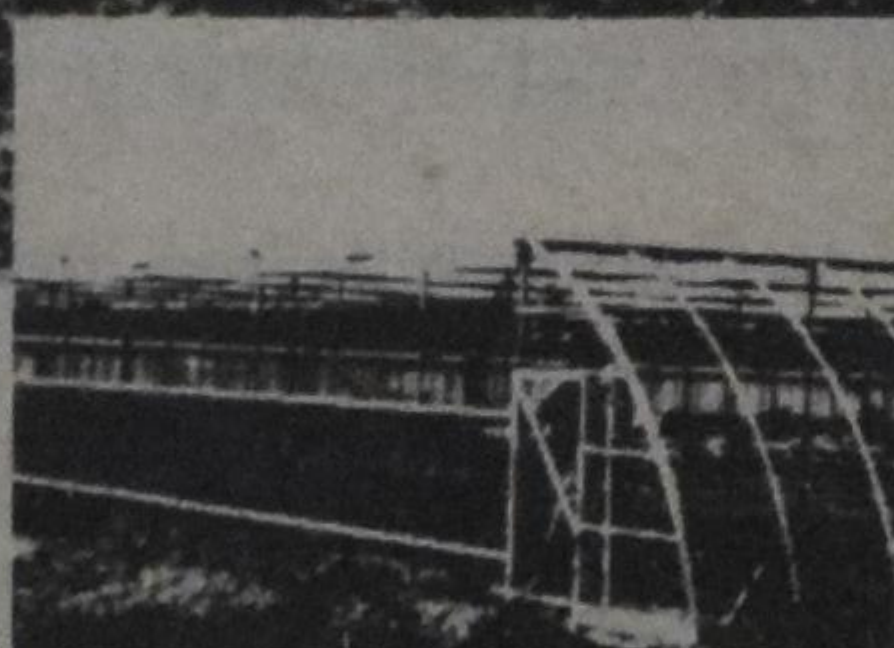
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Bert Witvoet

Wally and Fred stuck close together as they walked home from the Christmas program at the Anglican church. It was dark and the snow was snipping down like confetti. The occasional car kept the road fairly clear of the white stuff.

Fred was chewing away at a chocolate bar and Wally was humming one of the songs they had sung. Once in a while they would stop and stare at a house brightly decorated with lights. The ones with only blue lights they liked best. It made the snow look even colder than it was. It made Christmas feel a bit like magic.

"Did you see the humongous tree in the church upstairs," Fred chattered excitedly. "I bet it was a mile high."

"You kiddin'," laughed Wally. "A mile high would be higher than the CN tower. Three hundred feet maybe, but that's all."

"I know. But did you see all those silver and gold balls and strings?"

"What about them?" Wally wanted to know.

"I liked them. Didn't you?"

"I guess so. I don't think they're real silver and gold," Wally remarked, while he tried to read the cover of the book he had been given at the program. But it was too dark, and besides, the snow kept falling on the letters. The still warm book would get wet if he didn't keep it under his jacket.

"The minister was boring, wasn't he," Fred began again. "He used those big words and he kept looking at you when you weren't listening."

"I didn't understand a word he said," Wally replied. "But the lady with the

weird face was all right. She told a nice story."

"Yeah," echoed Fred, happy to see that his older brother was also excited about something. "It was a lot better than the dumb stories we get at school."

But Wally was lost in thought as he recalled the story of the shepherds who were sitting around in the field doing nothing, except cracking jokes and pulling pranks on young Geoffrey. Geoffrey had gotten mad because he wanted to eat something from his lunchpail and it turned out to be a slice of bread with sheep droppings pressed into it. It had looked like raisin bread to him, but it wasn't exactly that.

Wally laughed as he thought of it again. That woman could really tell a story.

When she came to the part of the angel, her eyes had sparkled and her voice had turned almost to gold. Boy were those angels bright, and boy were those shepherds scared. One of them nearly did it in his pants. Geoffrey, who had eaten the "raisin" sandwich, wasn't even mad anymore. And where were the practical jokers?

But the angels told them not to be scared. Come on you guys, don't be chicken. It's only us, us angels from heaven. But, but, but ... that's about all the shepherds could get out. Man, were they scared!

He wouldn't have been scared if he was there, Wally thought. He would have walked up to them angels and shaken their hands. "Nice meeting you guys. How're things in heaven?" He wouldn't have played a joke on them, of course, like the shepherds did with Geoffrey. That wouldn't be right. You don't want angels to bite into

A feeling of being special

sheep droppings. Besides, they'd probably notice it anyway with all that light around them.

And then the lady with the scarred face had told them how the shepherds beat it to Bethlehem. One of them was a cripple and he couldn't keep up. He was yelling at the other guys to slow down. They didn't really want to slow down, but they figured that if the angels were nice enough to come all the way from heaven to tell them about this fantastic baby, then they should wait for Speedy Gonzales with the bum leg.

But when the lady came to the point of the story where the shepherds arrived at the stable behind the Ephrata Hotel, her voice had become hushed and breathy, and her eyes had glistened.

All of the shepherds were caught by surprise. They were still a little hyper from the meeting with the angels. But all of a sudden they felt real calm and they quieted down. They weren't afraid like in the field. What they saw wasn't scary at all. It was so ... (how can I put it?) gentle, peaceful ... tender perhaps, except shepherds don't like to talk that way. You don't want to make it too mushy. But something in them had melted.

Don't forget, they had just before that seen a skyful of angels running up and down a real golden staircase that must have been five times as tall as the CN tower. And together the angels had sung sweetly, had thundered and whispered and danced the glory of God. And now that simple scene in the back shed -- the quiet father, the smiling mother and that teenie weenie baby with those tight little fists that closed tightly over Geoffrey's finger. Can you blame the shepherds for getting a little mushy?

How do you put it, anyway?

Wally didn't know how to put it either, but he knew the feeling. Sometimes you get a snatch of it when you pick up a little rabbit and hold it close to your face. The big eyes and the soft fur make you feel so good, so "tender and mild," as the song goes. But it never lasts. The stupid thing begins to struggle and scratches you right over the nose.

I bet those shepherds didn't keep it up either. It must have been a big letdown for them when they had to get back to the field. The early morning dew could make it cold so that you shivered to the bone. And you knew for sure that the droppings hadn't turned into raisins.

But the lady had said that they were never the same again afterwards. Sure, they still played practical jokes

on young Geoffrey, and they even complained about the pay because the cost of living had gone up in Judea. But they never felt so lost and unimportant again as they used to feel.

They had been hand-picked by God to listen to a concert straight from heaven. Man that was some music. And then they had been invited to the birthday of the Saviour of the world! Wow!

And according to the lady, all of us can feel the same way, because Jesus had come specially for us. And there was nothing wrong with visiting the stable in our minds.

But Wally didn't think it was necessary to visit baby Jesus in his mind. He was glad enough that those sheep guys could enjoy themselves so much.

They were in the front yard of their house now. Fred was still carrying on about the tall tree in the church and how one kid with the yellow shirt had spilled his chocolate milk all over the white table cloth and all over his own pants. What a mess. He was lucky the stuff wasn't too hot.

They opened the side door of the house, shook off the feathery snow by kicking against the side post, and stepped into the kitchen. A familiar warm, sour smell of food, garbage and other junk greeted them. Dirty dishes had piled up on the counter and the slop pail underneath the sink had not been emptied for days.

Their parents were in. Joe was on the phone chewing the cud with one of his buddies about a set of tires that weren't worth the price of a half-dollar bill. His grimy hands played with the cord. Mary was sitting on the couch in the front room watching a popular serial, reaching for a bag with cheezles from time to time.

Fred plunked down right next to her and forgot about the Christmas tree and the chocolate milk. Wally stood behind the couch and stared at the colour set too for a minute. But something inside him turned him away from the drama that held his mother spellbound. He walked back into the kitchen where his father swore at him for nearly tripping over a car battery. Wally knew better than to answer.

He decided to go to his bedroom and stay there for a while. He didn't right away want to lose that special feeling of being important. He wanted to dream a little more about what the shepherds would be doing now that the angels were gone and the sun was up. Also, he wanted to read into his new book called *Luke Baldwin's Vow*.

After all, if the lady with the burned face could feel special, so could he.

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Feature

A lion has roared!

It would be nice if governments were persuaded by argument alone. Then all one would have to do was present his case in a clear and orderly manner and trust that justice will prevail.

We all know that even modern democracies don't function that way. Governments are persuaded by numbers and by powers. For this reason Mr. Gerald Vandezande, representing the Institute for Christian Studies, asked various church leaders to write Premier Davis and Minister of Education Bette Stephenson on behalf of the Institute in connection with Bill 137.

The response, as the reader can see, was overwhelming. Fourteen letters by church leaders represent a large constituency. It will be interesting to see what the Government of Ontario will do now. No longer can it dismiss the request of the Institute as the squeak of a mouse. A lion has roared.

Below we reprint only sections of the fourteen letters that have arrived at Queen's Park.

Dear Premier Davis:

I write to you out of my great appreciation for the work of the Institute for Christian Studies, and concern for its future.

Over the past years a significant number of Anglican clergy and laity has participated in the courses and programs of the Institute. They have found the programs of the Institute especially helpful as they provide a unique opportunity for individuals to explore history, philosophy and social values from a particular perspective. It provides, as I say, a unique resource, which is different from, but very much complementary to, the work of distinctly church institutions, such as theological colleges and seminaries.

I understand that there is some question about the particular degree which the Institute should rightfully confer. I believe that the degree should fully indicate that it is granted upon the completion of a program of study in the humanities and social sciences rather than a focussed study on religion and theology. This is a significant difference which I would consider to be very important.

Rev. Edward W. Scott,
Primate, The Anglican Church
of Canada

Dear Premier Davis:

I write to express strong support for the unique work of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. As a person who has major responsibility for the continuing education for clergy of the Anglican Church of Canada, and for developing appropriate resources for Christian laity, I want to indicate that the Institute is a highly regarded resource. It provides a unique opportunity, particularly for laity, to explore the humanities and social sciences, including religion and theology, in a very significant way.

Rev. Richard G. Johns, Director,
Resources for Ministry,
The Anglican Church of Canada

Dear Mrs. Stephenson:

It is clear that the Institute for Christian Studies is not a "degree-granting mill", (the kind of institution at which the legislation is legitimately aimed), but is a legitimate college of higher learning which does not fall into an "acceptable" category, and which deserves special consideration.

It seems that the problem focuses on the titles of the degrees being offered. Perhaps, as a starting-point to negotiation, both parties might agree on a "Master of Philosophical Studies" in lieu of the Master of Philosophy, and a "Master of

Arts (Philosophical Studies)" in lieu of a straight Master of Arts.

Dr. Ronald F. Watts,
General Secretary, Baptist
Convention of Ontario
and Quebec

Dear Premier Davis:

The Canadian Council of Churches has long appreciated the work of The Institute for Christian Studies. It is a highly regarded resource in Toronto and a great many people have profited from its regarded resource in approach to history, philosophy and the social sciences. I write in some considerable concern for its future.

The Ministry of Education, I understand, has advanced the position that there should be a religious term in the degrees granted by the Institute. The Institute is a Christian academic institution and brings a particular point of view to its research and teaching. That, however, can be said of every academic institution both religious and secular and "point of view" is not normally reflected in the title granted. The Institute's academic approach and standards are comparable to other recognized institutions of higher learning in Ontario and, since its programme is in the humanities and social sciences rather than religion, it should be allowed to use a degree title which reflects that focus.

Donald W. Anderson,
General Secretary,
The Canadian Council
of Churches

Dear Mr. Davis:

The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, in session June 8-18, 1982 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, affirms the principle that people should be able to establish and operate educational institutions which offer instruction in the liberal arts, sciences and humanities taught in accordance with their basic religious convictions, for which generally accepted diplomas, certificates and degrees are offered, with or without government financial support, subject to reasonable regulations by the government.

Rev. Clarence Boomsma,
President of Synod, Christian
Reformed Church in
North America

Dear Mr. Davis:

We have learned that the ICS has pursued each option suggested to it by the office of the Minister of Colleges and Universities but to no avail. The avenue of affiliation with an Ontario university has been closed by each university offering graduate programs at the advanced Master

and Doctoral level in the disciplines for which the ICS seeks a charter.

Affiliation with non-Canadian institutions is unsatisfactory because they do not offer similar programs - and such affiliation does not place the scholarship of the ICS in the Canadian academic context.

Rev. Arle G. Van Esk,
Executive Secretary, Council of
Christian Reformed Churches
in Canada

Dear Premier Davis:

"Degree mills" are spurious by nature. The Institute for Christian Studies, by contrast, has already proven by its results that it is an authentic educational enterprise. "Degree mills" subvert the educational process. ICS advances it with a commendable sense of excellence.

I write you with the confidence that once you have seen the perils as well as the values of Bill 137, you will not let it proceed until it has been reworded so as to safeguard the continuing functioning of the Institute for Christian Studies.

Donald N. Bastian, Bishop,
The Free Methodist Church
in Canada



Over my dead bust!

While behind the wall, representatives of the ICS are meeting with Dr. Bette Stephenson, the bust of Egerton Ryerson keeps a lonely vigil. Egerton Ryerson is the founder of the public school system in Upper Canada (Ontario). In 1846 he published his *Report*, on which the state-funded school system was organized. Ironically, it is the shadow of ideas contained in this report that makes it difficult for a private Christian Institute to gain degree granting status today. Move over, Egerton

Dear Mr. Davis:

The present case of the Institute for Christian Studies amply illustrates the problem. For 15 years the Institute has been making an excellent contribution

to the mosaic of higher education in Ontario. Since its teaching and research program are in the liberal arts, focussing on the study of philosophy from a Christian perspective, but not including the training of clergy for church vocations, it is not appropriate for the Institute to have a charter to grant degrees comparable to those of theological seminaries and Bible colleges. Government policy not to grant charters for "secular" degrees should not be used to prevent the Institute from continuing to offer the Master of Philosophy degree.

Rev. Charles Yates, President,
Evangelical Fellowship
of Canada

Honourable Minister:

Having spent six years on the Board of Governors of Waterloo Lutheran University (now known as Wilfrid Laurier University), two of them as President of that Board, the necessity of proper relations between the state and educational institutions was constantly before us.

I agree that governments (the state) must guard the public against false and misleading claims by educational institutions. I am also convinced that we must guard against over-control by government. The culture of a nation is enriched by a variety of pedagogical approaches. Democracy in the educational field must be protected.

I sympathize with the objection of the Institute of Christian Studies to inserting the word "Christian" in its degrees. Such an inclusion would convey to the public a parochial or narrow viewpoint, which is the opposite to what such an institution is doing when it has been anxious to include a broad range of subject matter in its offerings.

J.M. Zimmerman,
Executive Secretary,
Lutheran Church in America,
Canada Section

Dear Mr. Davis:

Our particular concern is its effect on reputable institutes or colleges that are likely to be adversely affected by the passing of this bill. A case in point would be The Institute for Christian Studies.

This Institute, with an excellent standing among the churches for its accomplishment in the liberal arts from a Christian perspective, would apparently not be able to continue to offer the Master of Philosophy degree.

It is our request that amendments be made to this proposed legislation that would enable reputable establishments to have the authority to grant appropriate degrees.

Rev. Charles Yates,
General Secretary,
The Pentecostal Assemblies
of Canada

Dear Premier Davis:

The Institute is of great value to The Presbyterian Church in Canada and to the Christian community in general precisely because it is not in the business of training ministers or conferring "religious" degrees.

Though it approaches the graduate study of the humanities and social sciences from a Christian perspective, the Institute's purpose is to discover how the various disciplines and Christianity can mutually inform, enlighten and support each other. There is no specifically "theological" programme and hence the conferring of a "religious" degree would be inappropriate. Perhaps, under the provisions of Bill 137, a new degree could be designated as fitting for the Institute.

The academic standards of the

Institute are excellent. Their doctoral programme is run jointly with the Free University of Amsterdam - a school with a worldwide reputation. The Institute is not a narrow sectarian organization in any sense and admission is open to anyone who qualifies academically. It is a valuable and unique resource that Canadian Christians need and appreciate. Removal of the right to grant degrees would be a serious, if not irreparable blow.

Rev. Dr. Wayne A. Smith,
Moderator,
The Presbyterian Church
in Canada

Dear Premier Davis:

The Institute is not a theological college, nor does it exist for the academic upgrading of clergy. It seeks to explore the interrelatedness of Christian thought and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Granting "religious" degrees would not only be inappropriate for the Institute, it would be dishonest.

At a time when, for example, Economics Departments at various schools are recognized as being Keynesian, Marxist, Capitalist, etc., and not thought to be academically less creditable, why should there be a difficulty with an institution offering a Christian perspective on this and other subjects?

James Ross Dickey,
Editor,
The Presbyterian Record

Dear Premier Davis:

May I say, first, that I see nothing wrong with the wish of the Institute to retain its right to confer the degree of Master of Philosophy. Could the law of Ontario be made subtle enough to permit it to retain this right and at the same time to foster high academic standards in the Province?

If such a course of action is impossible, in view of the rethinking and reconstruction that it would require within our academic system, may I plead that the demand for a religious reference in the academic titles of the Institute for Christian Studies be dropped. This demand gives the impression of ideological discrimination: while the secularist premises reigning in the Academia are allowed to pose as truth pure and simple, it is demanded of religious convictions that they declare their "sectarian bias" and thus tacitly acknowledge their second class citizenship.

**Aloysius M. Ambrozic, Auxiliary
Bishop of Toronto,
Roman Catholic Church**

Dear Premier Davis:

I wish to briefly state three points in this letter:

1. The list of persons who have found the work of the Institute for Christian Studies to be adequate, effective and of unique value in equipping them to interpret history, philosophy and ethics in a well-rounded manner, provides an eloquent testimony to the value of the education imparted and the degree secured...
2. There seems to be very good precedent in other jurisdictions having oversight of academic work for the awarding of this degree and the right of I.C.S. to continue to do so...
3. I would hope that the pooling of the creativity of the Department of Colleges and Universities and that of the Institute for Christian Studies in suggestions which may be made for a solution to this problem that is mutually satisfactory would occur.

Clarke MacDonald,
Moderator,
The United Church
of Canada

God is with us

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" - which means, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

From Holland has come to us a new document called "God with us." It is a study on how to read the Bible. The desire is that members of the Reformed Church of The Netherlands may read the Bible in a way that they may know and experience God living with them. We should all want to have God with us.

The central message of the Bible is that God, knowing we could never come to him, has come to be with us. The whole Old Testament anticipates this great event, and the New declares it: Jesus, he is the Immanuel, God with us! God has come to us, not in a book, not as a concept or as a doctrine of salvation, but as the person of God in the flesh, as a man. And if you and I want to have God with us, if we want to live with the power of God, then we must know this Jesus, the Living Word.

We don't live until we live in Christ. When we have the mind of Christ, who never strove to be like God but rather became like us humans, then we will know the truth about God and about ourselves. When we by faith take hold of Christ, we will meet God, we will see what he is like, and we will see what we ought to be like.

Jesus, the Immanuel, shows us God's love, his mercy, his holiness and his wisdom. And we will share those qualities in increasing measure as we search, not for true ideas, but for the Truth.

Sometimes we are guided and get sentimental over the manger scene or squabble about the virgin birth. Our heart's focus should be upon this miracle, that God, born in a barn from the womb of an unmarried Jewish woman, has come to dwell among us with all his glory.

Wouldn't it be tragic if on Christmas Day we had a meal with all the trimmings, but never shared in the eternal food and drink? Come, let us feast our hearts with the Shepherds and Wise Men and worship God, singing: "Joy to the world! THE LORD IS COME!"

God is with us!

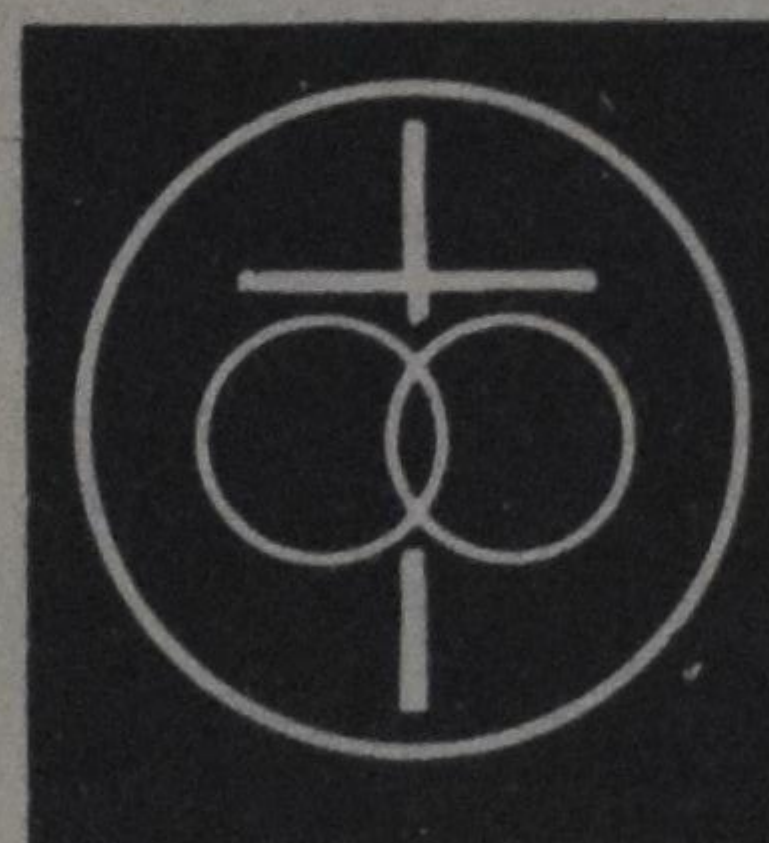
Rev. Tuininga is pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Prince George, British Columbia.

William C. Tuininga

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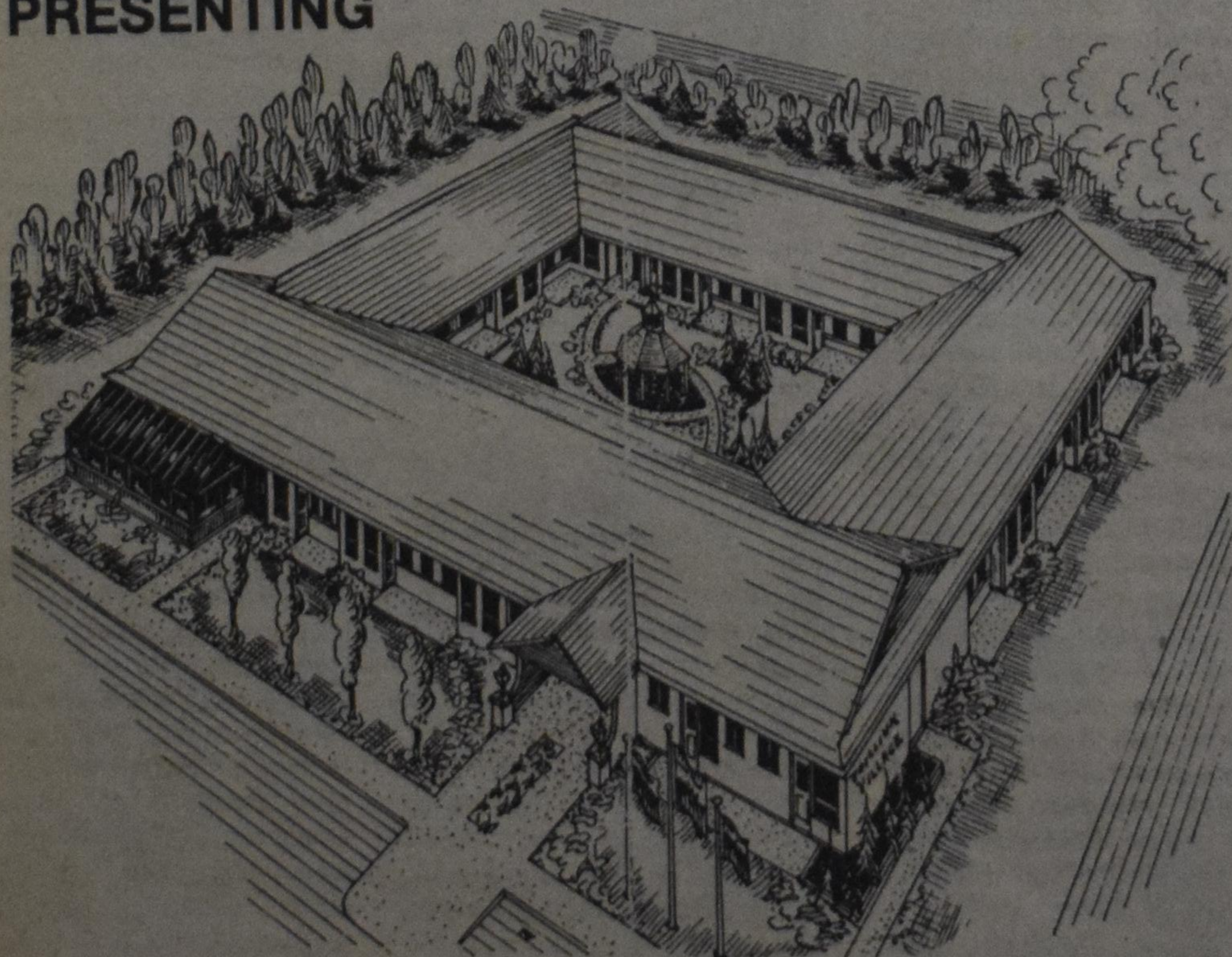
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Feature

Scott Mission: An oasis for the poor

The Scott Mission is an institution well known to most Torontonians. Situated on Spadina Avenue near College, it provides a ministry to the poor that goes back to 1908.

At that time it was known as The Christian Synagogue and operated under the auspices of the Foreign Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. One of the Jewish immigrants it ministered to was Morris Zeidman. He became a Christian as a result and graduated from Knox College in 1925 to become the Superintendent of the Scott Institute in the year following.

From that time on the Zeidman family has put an indelible stamp on the institution and they saw it flourish in miraculous ways. Today, 18 years after the death of Morris Zeidman, son Alex directs the mission and is assisted by his mother, brother, two sisters and three assorted spouses. It is with Maureen Zeidman, Alex's wife, that the Editor had an interview on November 24.

Bert Witvoet

As I enter the building, I hear faint sounds of a piano being played and some men singing along. "Maybe Maureen is taking part in the program," I think; "may as well check it out."

I enter what looks like a dining hall with 80 to 100 men sitting at tables, holding songbooks and singing, "Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling Clementine." The song leader, who turned out to be Director Alex Zeidman, sings lustily, while most of the men are dragging or humming alone. Some don't even bother to sing. Elaine Zeidman is at the piano.

I stay through three songs, then leave to start looking for Maureen. She is in the front office. As the traffic is heavy there we decided to move upstairs to her husband's office.

A comprehensive ministry

Maureen explains that Scott Mission tries to look after the whole person. Its main efforts have been with transient men, but in later years the work has become broader and includes women, children, families.

"We hand out groceries, provide meals, sometimes for 800 or more, give tickets for haircuts, provide showers, clothing, nursery school for low-income single parent families. There are meetings for the men to help them cope with loneliness and anger. We show them films, talk with them. We have small group sessions for women with deep emotional wounds because of battering, incest and other forms of abuse and problems."

Social problems have become more acute of late, according to Maureen. More women are showing up because of the shortage of

houses. The soup lines are getting longer too.

Scott Mission gets its funding through voluntary donors. Private industry, churches, business and individuals donate freely to it. Support cuts right across religious backgrounds.

But the Zeidmans have not forgotten about the gospel message that changed the life of their husband and father. Alex Zeidman is still a Presbyterian minister. Although no one has to sit through an evangelistic session in order to qualify for help, opportunities are offered to take part in chapel and devotions as well as Bible studies and other spiritual support events.

Maureen, who met her husband when she was a secretary to Morris Zeidman, is at the moment mostly involved in small support groups for women. She also coordinates her department with family support at Christmas time.

Last year the Mission provided 3,000 food hampers at Christmas time. This year it looks as if it's going to be 4,000 hampers. Each recipient family gets a turkey, Christmas cake and basic foods in a small, medium or large hamper according to the size of the family. It takes about 10 people one full week to prepare the food hampers.

I ask Maureen whether people sometimes romanticize her work.

"Oh yes," she smiles. "Some will say, 'It must be so rewarding and so wonderful.' But most of it is hard, draining work. People can be very abusive and demanding."

"And you still have to fight materialism yourself, like others?" I ask.

"It's even more difficult," Maureen replies. "You have a greater sense of guilt because you are daily confronted with the need of the poor. We live in a comfortable house in mid Toronto. I don't think we could survive living in the building all the time."

"There are some who choose to identify with the poor by living among them. I think of a person who works on the streets of Toronto. He lives in one room. But he is at the point of realizing that he needs more privacy. I am afraid he will burn out if he doesn't watch it."

I ask Maureen whether warm fuzzy feelings are a good foundation for the kind work she is doing.

"A person with warm, fuzzy feelings will soon be disillusioned. Conviction is what keeps you going when there is no satisfaction. People don't always give you warm fuzzy thank yous. But one does have to have a feeling for people, of course. A deep concern or love for people. Above all you need spiritual resources to draw on." Maureen goes on to explain that the spiritual resources she is talking about

are prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit. She is part of a mixed Bible study group along with her husband. She also engages in Bible study with five other women. The official worship setting of the church does not always provide the kind of strength she needs. But she admits that that may be partly because she cannot get deeply involved in the work of the church. The mission demands all the involvements she can muster.

"Do you ever blame a person for the situation he or she is in?" I ask Maureen.

"There are times that you feel a person could have handled the situation better. A battered woman comes along and you ask, why does she

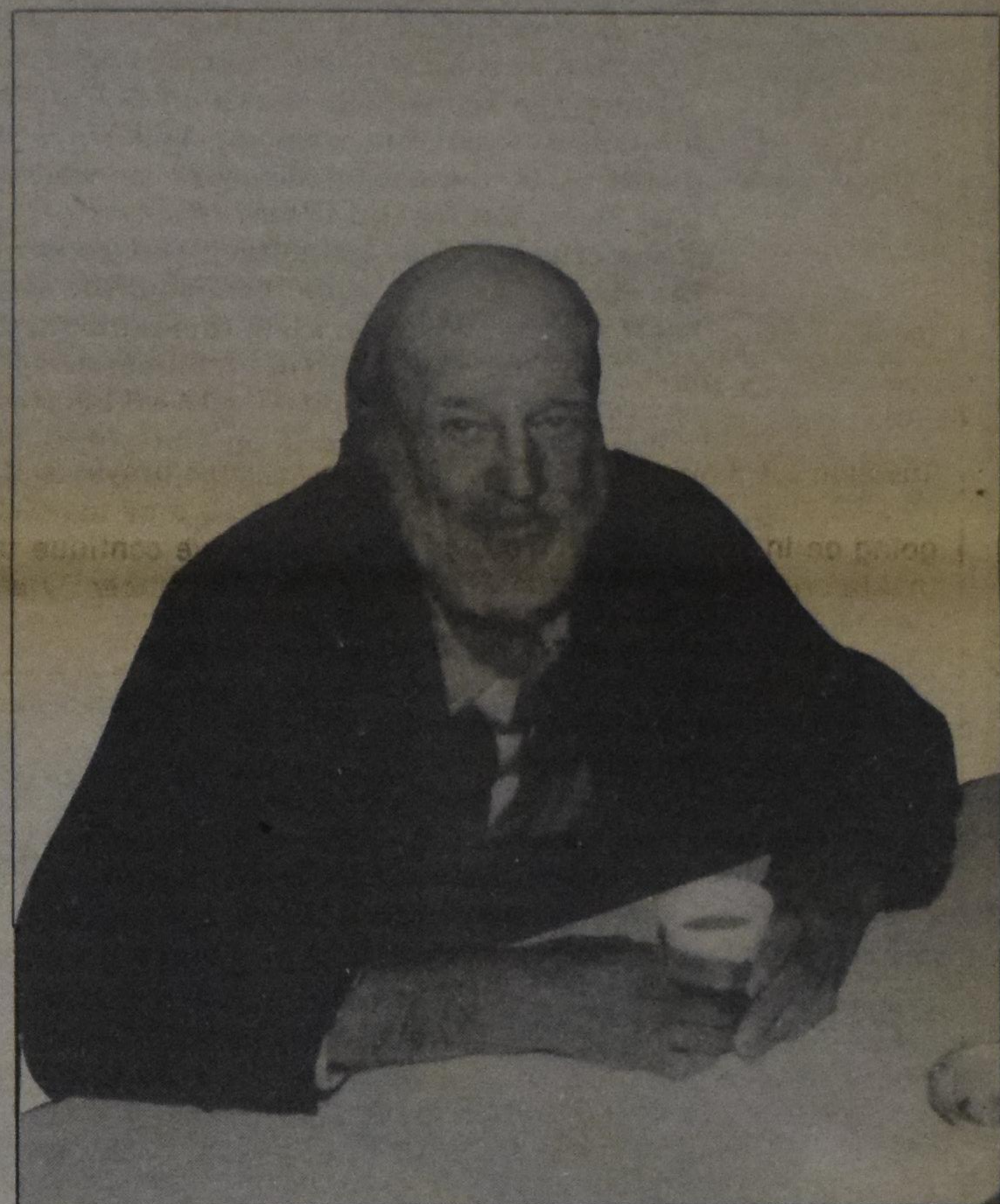
How does one bring the donor and recipient together?

"Donors can be very judgmental. If the recipient looks too clean and has a television set, the donor may think that he or she is not deserving of support. You have to look the stereotype poor person."

"And then there is the matter of the pride of the recipient. Most families prefer to receive assistance through an institution."

"Some people who want to do something, phone us and ask for information on a needy family. Then they do the shopping and prepare the food hamper. But they let us hand it to the family."

"I suppose the best way is to think of the people you



stay with the husband and take all this abuse for years? But then you realize that so many people feel trapped. They don't know how to get out."

"Do you ever find that you have helped a person break out of a pattern, or are you waiting for your reward in heaven?" I want to know.

Maureen laughs. "It's not always rewarding in the here and now, but there are encouragements along the way. Sometimes someone writes a letter and tells us that he or she was helped at a difficult time and is now doing well. But you don't look for rewards like that or you will be disappointed. Most of the work consists of helping people cope."

"We are moving into Christmas celebrations, as you well know," I comment. "What can a Christian middle-class family do to make that celebration a bit more Christ-like?"

"If you're thinking of helping a poor family, there is a problem," Maureen reflects.

know in your church or neighborhood. Elderly people or lonely people, students from overseas; they may appreciate a family setting at Christmas time. Why look for a total stranger?"

I spend more time at the Mission, receiving a guided tour from Linda VanderVelde, who interviews people for emergency groceries. I enter a classroom with kids, upstairs; downstairs people are picking through clothes and groceries. In the dininghall an old man tells someone to go somewhere for taking the sugar bowl from him. But he quickly smiles when I ask for a picture.

"Never a dull moment in this place," Elaine Zeidman told me after she had finished playing the piano in the men's hall. She is right. People who come here for help bring along a lot of drama, including the display of what's wrong with society and with mankind.

But the grace of God provides an oasis at 502 Spadina, even if someone does take away your sugar bowl.

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REDEEMER Reflections

THE REDEEMER COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 1



December, 1982

... from the President



Rev. Henry De Bolster

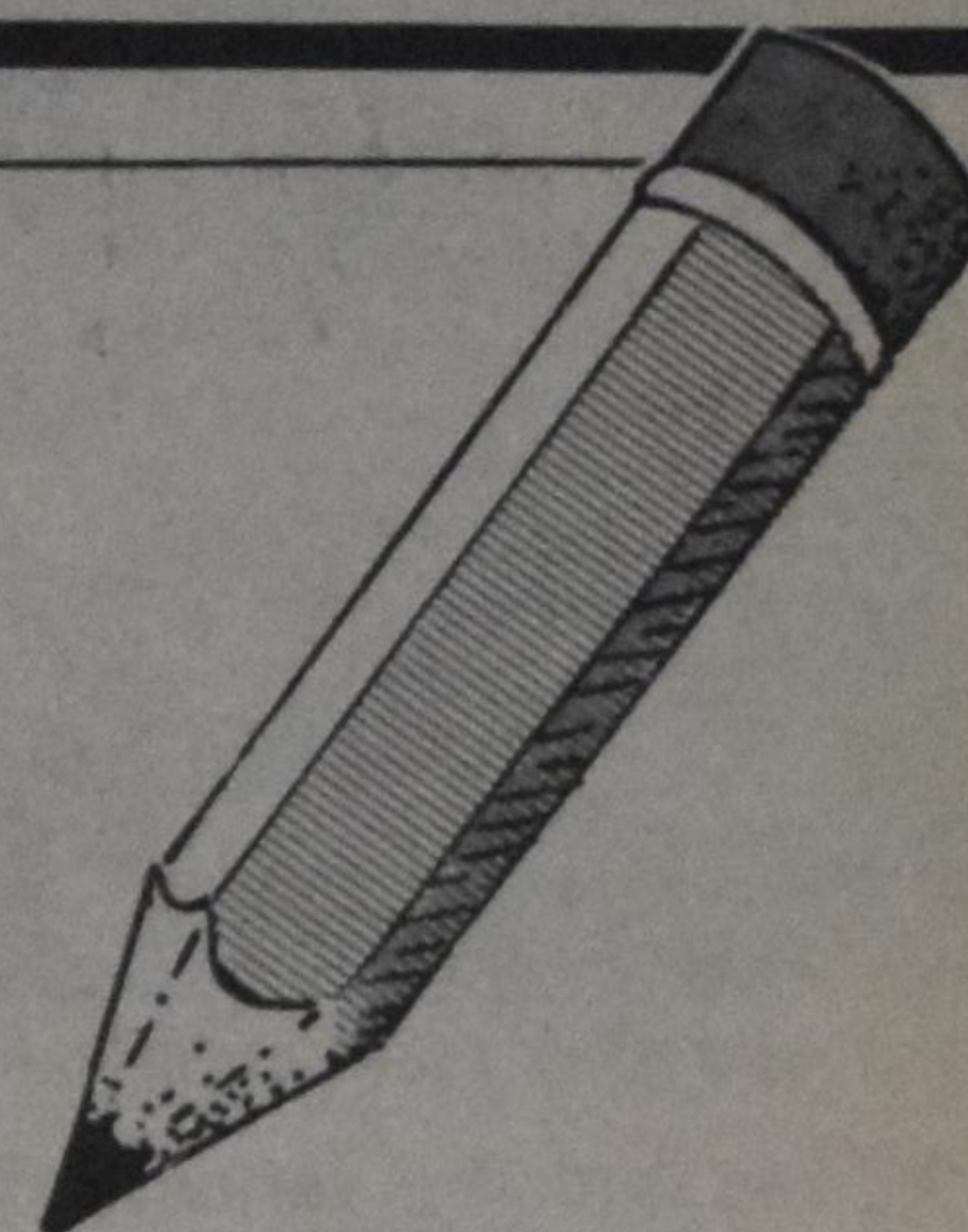
We have been struggling with the question of how to keep you, our membership, informed as to what is going on in your college. To mail you that information regularly costs a lot of money; and yet you need to know,

because otherwise you cannot pray for us properly, and you will not be able to bring some specific needs before the Lord. Moreover, the simple knowledge of what transpires here will help you talk about us and support us.

Therefore, we are very happy that we have been able to make an arrangement with *Calvinist Contact* to get the news out to you on a regular basis at little cost to us. We are thankful to the editors of *Calvinist Contact* that they are willing to be of help to us in this way.

You will be receiving the news from Redeemer College through our news releases, *Reflections*, on a regular basis from now on. The idea is to tell you what happens at the college as well as to reflect on both the events that take place here and the purpose for reformed Christian higher education. We invite your comments, we ask for your prayer and financial support and we pray that God will richly bless us as we continue this important task at *Redeemer Reformed Christian College*.

Some Statistics



A number of people have asked why we need Redeemer College at all. Their argument goes something like this: "We already have a network of Christian Colleges. Why do we have to start another one, particularly in these tough economic times?"

The answer is really quite revealing. Over the past number of years, approximately 80 freshman students have entered Calvin College each year. This year, Calvin informs us that it registered 40 Canadian freshmen, most of whom came from Ontario. Redeemer College registered 97 freshmen. The simple arithmetic points out that now, instead of 80 Canadian freshmen in Calvin College, there are 137 Canadian freshmen in Calvin College and Redeemer College combined. This means an increase of approximately 70%.

One of the most important reasons for Redeemer College's existence is the fact that more young men and women than ever before are obtaining a post-secondary education at a Christian liberal arts institution.

An Opening Remembered



What a glorious day it was on Labour Day, September 6, when over 1,700 of God's people came together to officially mark the opening of Redeemer College. It was a service of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, for we acknowledge that He made all things possible.

Redeemer supporters came from far and wide, from Sarnia to Montreal, from Chatham to Ottawa. They included opa's and oma's, pake's and beppe's, grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers and mothers, young men and young women, children of all sizes and even infants in arms. They came together with the single purpose to praise God for His blessings.

Acting Dean Justin Cooper served

as the marshall for the Academic Processional, ushering in not only faculty members of Redeemer College, but also many invited guests representing various organizations and institutions. They included Joseph Bennett (Mayor, Town of Dundas), William Powell (Mayor, City of Hamilton), Helen Detwiler (Chairperson, Hamilton Board of Education), George Vander Velde (Acting Chairman, Institute for Christian Studies), William Grin, (President, Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools), David Zylstra, (President of the Board, Christian Schools International), Ralph Spence, (Canon, St. Luke's Anglican Church), May Drost, (Board of Governors, Redeemer College), Lammert Slof-

stra (Chairman of the Interim Committee, Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada), Alvin Lee (President, McMaster University), Jerry Hoytema (Executive Committee, Board of Trustees, Calvin College and Seminary), George Van Groningen (President, Trinity Christian College), Thomas Oosterhuis (Chairman of the Senate, The King's College), John Hulst (President, Dordt College), and John Zantlingh (Chairman, Board of Governors, Redeemer College).

Rev. John Zantlingh, led the ceremony. The singing that took place at the service was of a very special nature. When Canadians get together in large numbers to sing praises unto the Lord, it seems it is always very special, and it was no different at Redeemer's first Convocation.

Dr. Joel Nederhood, Director of Ministries of the Back to God Hour, presented the keynote address entitled, "Christian Education and the Reigning Orthodoxies". In his presentation, Dr. Nederhood minced no words in pointing out the philosophies that appear to be reigning in so many areas of today's world and society. He re-emphasized the role of Christian education in preparing young men and women in order to combat those prevailing philosophies.

Greetings were brought on behalf of McMaster University by Dr. Alvin Lee; on behalf of the Christian educational institutions by Dr. John Hulst and on behalf of the churches by Rev. Lammert Slofstra.

Harry Den Nederlanden of St.

Catharines had prepared a special convocation litany. The readers of the litany were Hugh Cook, Professor of English at Redeemer College and May Drost of London, representing the Board of Governors. Based almost entirely on Scripture, his efforts in preparing the litany were particularly appreciated.

During the course of the service, the efforts of certain people were acknowledged and those present responded with warm applause. However, the most sustained applause was saved for the 97 special young men and women who form the "pioneer" student body at Redeemer College.

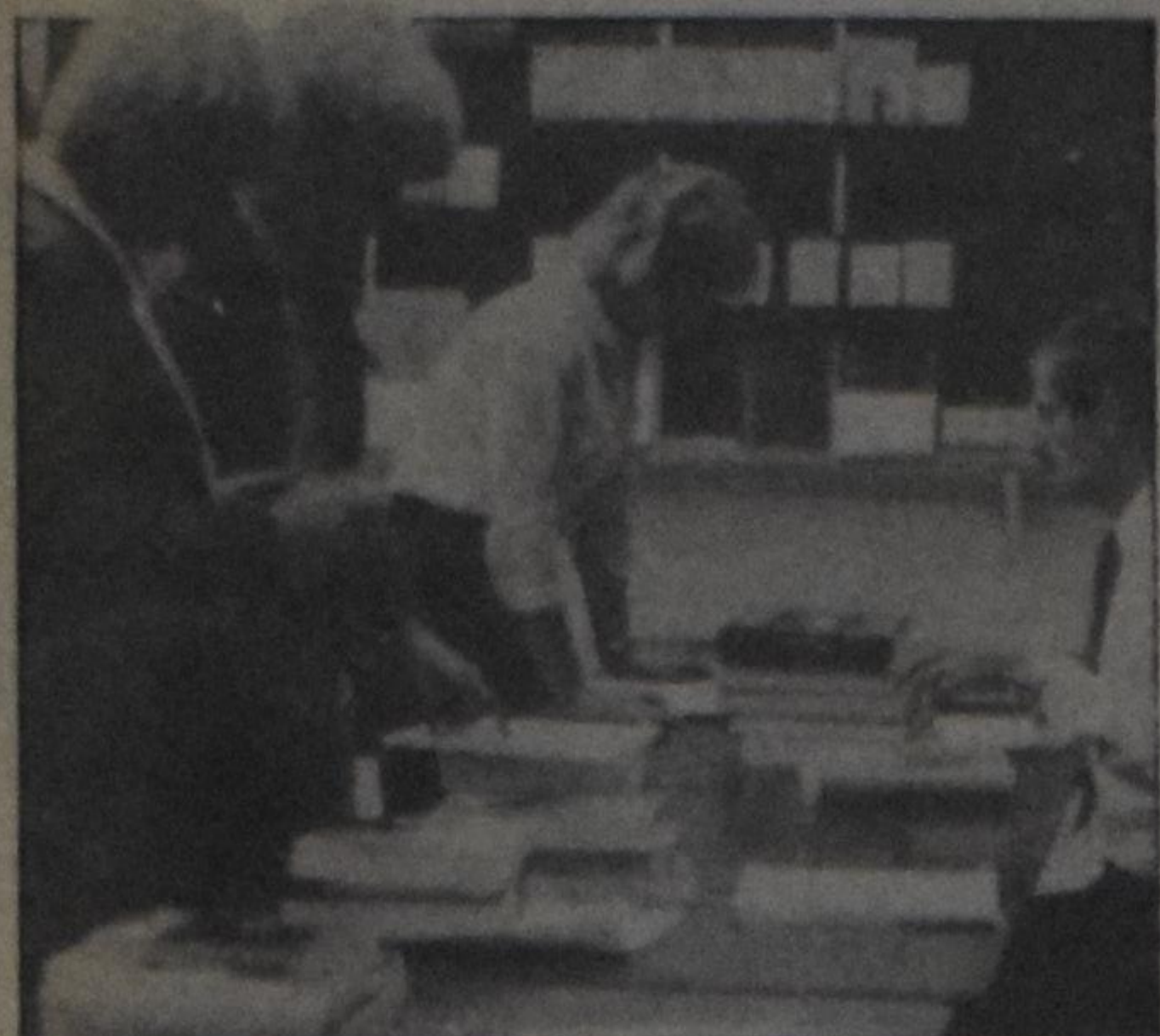
After the Convocation, hundreds of people proceeded to the Redeemer College campus for an Open House. Here friends and supporters of Redeemer College were able to inspect the newly renovated facilities. The halls were packed, people were crammed in the gym, there wasn't enough coffee, but there was a genuine spirit of joyfulness and thankfulness that will not soon be matched.

The official opening of Redeemer College in its first Convocation had been advertised as being one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences. It truly was! The efforts of many in the preparation of the opening of Redeemer College for the first time had been very specifically and uniquely blessed. To Him alone be all the glory and praise! Redeemer College now marches confidently into the future, committed to serving the Lord in preparing young men and women for service in His Name.

Beginnings

Move In:

The school year at Redeemer College actually began on Monday, August 30, 1982. On that day, the Resident Assistants and the dorm



Buying books after class registration.

cooks moved into the various dormitory units. An orientation meeting was held all afternoon, which included Mrs. Susan Vander Vaart, our Housing Co-ordinator, Dr. Harry Van Belle, the Student Affairs Director, and Jim Berry, the Resident Director. All aspects of dormitory living were discussed, including the rules and regulations for student life at Redeemer.

The next day, the rest of the students who would be living in college-sponsored housing moved into their new homes. Some 65 students live in Redeemer College dorms, while another 6 or 7 live in room and board situations. A couple of students live in independent housing. The rest live at home.

Parent orientation:

As most of the parents of the students were assisting their sons and daughters in moving into the various types of housing, an orientation session for parents was held on Tuesday afternoon. At this meeting, they were introduced to the faculty and administration; they were given an opportunity to tour the facilities; Rev. De Bolster and Arend Kersten outlined the program of the college to them in detail, particularly as it relates to students and student life. This meeting also presented the parents with an opportunity to ask questions and it served to help the parents become more acquainted with the college and its program.

Wiener roast:

On Tuesday evening, a wiener roast was held on the beach behind the school. Almost all of the students were present and were joined by the professors, as well as administration and staff members. It was an opportunity for the students to get to know each other a little better as many were strangers to each other.

Opening assembly:

On Wednesday morning, September 1, 1982, an assembly at the school marked the official opening of Redeemer College for the students. Rev. De Bolster led the chapel service and thanked the Lord for His incredible blessings on the beginnings of Redeemer College. The tremendous amount of work and prayer that had taken place for years had finally come to concrete expression. We were opening the doors for the first time and flesh and blood students were actually present. For many present that morning, it was a very emotional moment.

Faculty-student interviews:

After the assembly, students were

given an opportunity to meet with their individual faculty advisors. All of the full-time professors serve as advisors to the students and each student is assigned to a particular professor. Each professor has approximately 12 advisees. When the professor and student met, they discussed at length the student's educational background, his/her vocational desires, strengths, weaknesses and interests and approved a course of study for each student. This was just another way in which Redeemer College was making good its promise to treat each student as a very special individual, receiving much personal care and attention. The individual faculty advisor-student interviews continued all day Wednesday.



Tug of war at the Student Retreat. John Bolt and his group of advisers, better known as "Lightning Bolts".

Registration:

Thursday morning saw the actual registration. Students were permitted into the gym in the order in which they had applied for admission to Redeemer College. Every 15 minutes another group of students entered the gym where they could select their classes and their class times. Faculty advisors were available to assist the students with class scheduling problems.

Student orientation:

In the afternoon, there was a lengthy student orientation session where the program and the rules and regulations of the college were discussed at length. The calendar was distributed and explained, as well as the student handbook. It was an opportunity again for students to get to know each other better and to become more aware of the aims and goals of the college.

Retreat:

On Friday and Saturday, September 3 and 4, 1982, all the students, most of the faculty members, and many members of the administration, went on a 2-day retreat. The retreat was held at Mount Mary Immaculate Retreat Center in Ancaster. It was in these superb facilities that students, faculty and administration spent 2 days together, not only having a great deal of fun together, but also spending a significant amount of time discussing various aspects of the college.

The student body of Redeemer College is a very special and unique one. It is the "pioneer" student body. The directions that it sets with regard to student life, student activities and student community will affect the college for many years to come. So, at our retreat, a great deal of time was spent in small discussion groups talking about student clubs, student council, yearbook, newspaper, academic council representation, intramural sports and extra-curricular activities.

Perhaps the most significant development at this retreat was that here already the student body started to experience community. 97 young men

talents; and the evening went on for over 3 hours. People played the piano, sang, acted in skits, read their own poetry and played their guitars.



Wiener roast on the beach at Redeemer — a time to get acquainted.

Convocation:

The highlight of the orientation week, however, was Monday, Labour Day, September 6, 1982, our first Convocation. What a very special moment it was for everyone when the students stood up as a student body and were introduced and welcomed by Rev. Zantling. Those of you who were there will remember the very genuine, warm and sustained applause they received. Many students told us later how shivers were running up and down their spine during that very special moment.

On Tuesday morning, September 7, 1982, at 8:30 in the morning, classes began.

Footnote: 97 students enrolled at Redeemer College in September. It is not unusual to expect a number of College freshmen to drop out during the first two months or so. However, two months into the school year, all 97 students are still on campus.

Application for Admission SEPTEMBER 1983

- Redeemer College is now receiving applications for admission for the 1983-84 Academic Year.
- Grade 12 graduates, Grade 13 graduates, transfer students and mature students are invited to apply.

If you are thinking about going on to any form of post-secondary education, why not check out the Redeemer College program. For more information, complete the coupon below and mail it to Redeemer College or contact Arend Kersten at the Student Affairs Office, 467 Beach Boulevard, Hamilton, Ontario. L8H 6W8. Phone: (416) 549-8024.

I am interested in the Redeemer College program. Please send me more information.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ POSTAL CODE: _____

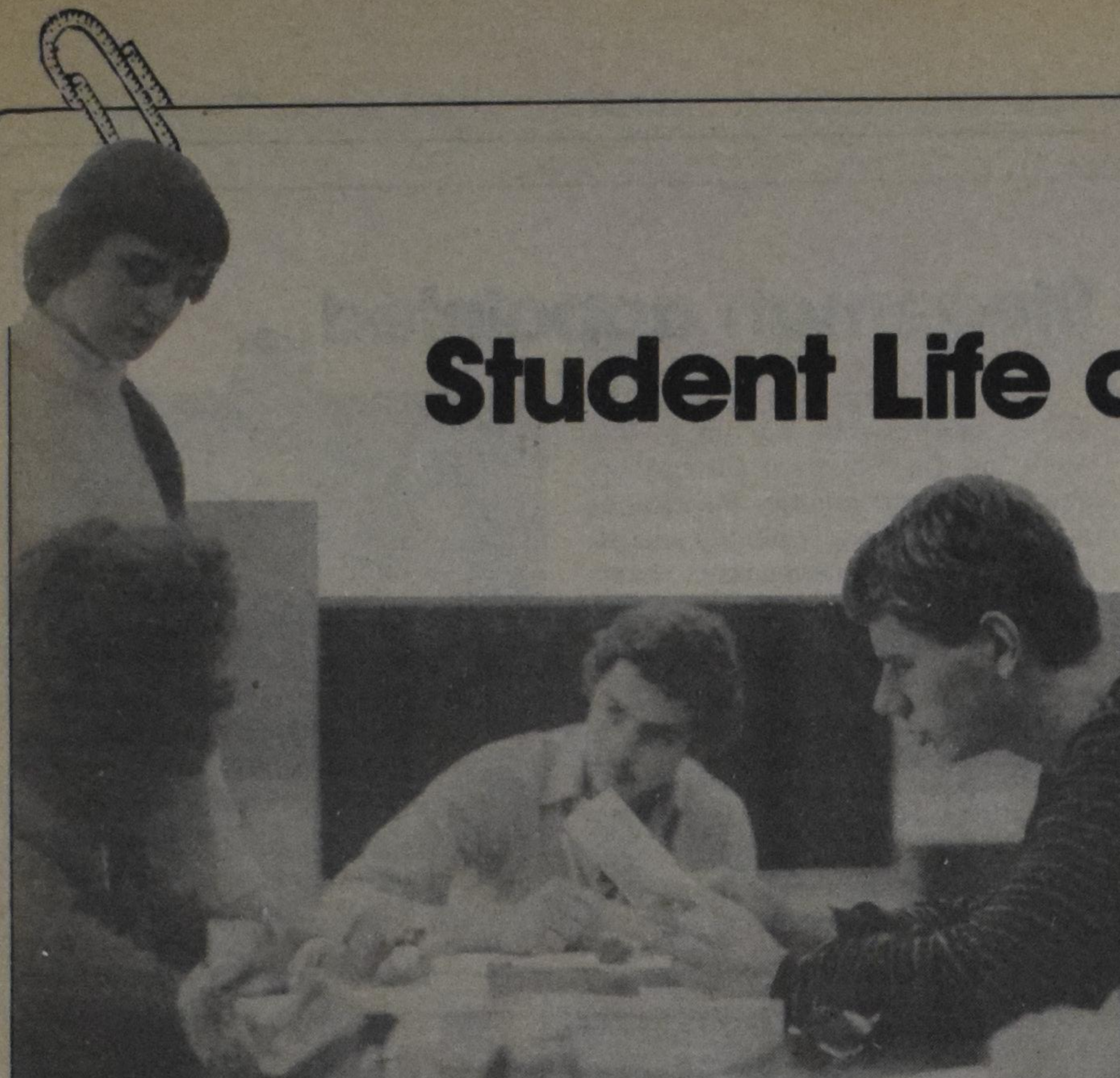
TELEPHONE: _____

AGE: _____ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR: _____

VOCATIONAL GOALS: 1. _____

2. _____ 3. _____

.....



Wilma Bues (standing) from Listowel, Steve Talsma and Chris Lieverdink

Student Life at Redeemer

Of course, the academic sphere is the most important one at Redeemer College, but at the same time, books, studying, and exams form only part of the total picture. Listed below are some of the various activities which are available to the students and which aid in providing a complete and balanced program.

STUDENT COUNCIL:

Early in the school year, the student body of Redeemer College had nominations, election campaigns and voting for a Student Council. There are 4 members on the Executive Board and 5 members-at-large. The Student Council represent the students to the administration and organizes many extra-curricular activities. Arend Kersten serves as college liaison to the Student Council.

ATHLETIC COUNCIL:

The Athletic Council is composed of interested students who coordinate many of the sports activities at

Redeemer College. Their primary work involves the intramural program which includes volleyball, basketball and badminton. In addition, they organize exhibition games with area Christian High Schools and public high schools. The Athletic Council has also met with the Director of Physical Education at McMaster University and has obtained permission to have Redeemer students participate in the McMaster intramural program, which includes no fewer than 38 different activities. Dr. John Bolt serves as advisor to this group.

CATECHISM CLASSES:

In order to maintain a balance between the spiritual, social, recreational and academic dimensions of life at Redeemer College, the College assists where it can in promoting participation in various activities. One of the most important activities is a student's participation in local church life. Therefore, students are encouraged to become members of a local church and to participate actively in its program.

Students have until the end of October to indicate to the College which church they will be attending while a student at Redeemer College and then these churches are notified of the student's intentions.

Every Tuesday night, the Redeemer College bus is used to transport students between the dorms and the Burlington Christian Reformed Church for catechism classes, pre-confession classes and post-confession classes. The Burlington Christian Reformed Church has been particularly helpful in hosting Redeemer students.

WORSHIP SERVICES:

Every Sunday, the Redeemer College bus is used to transport students from the dorms to area Christian Reformed Churches. As the majority of the students have indicated a desire to participate in the program of the Burlington Christian Reformed Church, the bus goes to this church,

YEARBOOK:

A number of students, under the direction of Dr. T. Plantinga, have formed a Yearbook Committee and are busy at work planning, preparing and publishing a Yearbook, in order to commemorate the "pioneer" year at Redeemer College. Tammy Boer of Niagara-on-the-Lake is the editor of the Yearbook.

NEWSPAPER:

Professor Hugh Cook, Professor of English at Redeemer College, is serving as faculty advisor to the Redeemer newspaper. Co-editors are Peter Van Egmond of Toronto and Annette Vander Ploeg of Renfrew. The newspaper will be published from time to time with the emphasis being on quality of content rather than on the number of issues.

HOCKEY CLUB:

Mostly through the efforts of Don Stelpstra, one of our students from



Over 50,000 books from the Redeemer College library collection.

most of the time. However, from time to time, students are transported to other area Christian Reformed Churches. Jim Berry, our Resident Director, is the usual bus driver, but sometimes volunteers from the community take over for him. 90 of our 97 students are Christian Reformed.

CHOIR:

Gerzinus Hoekstra, a well-known choir director from St. Catharines, was appointed choir director of the Redeemer College chamber choir prior to the beginning of the school year. Of our 97 full-time students, approximately 40 have joined the choir.

The choir not only performs in area churches during church services, but also performs in concert. A special Christmas concert was prepared by the choir and was presented in the Mount Hamilton Christian Reformed Church on Friday, December 3, 1982 at 8:00 and in the Covenant Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines on Sunday, December 5, 1982 at 8:15. It is our hope that the choir will tour various Christian communities during the spring.

DRAMA CLUB:

A large number of our students were involved in drama club activities in their local high schools prior to coming to Redeemer. Because of the amount of interest, a drama club was formed on campus under the direction of Mr. Douglas Loney, who is a part-time instructor in English at Redeemer College. During the fall term, the participants in this club prepared a number of one-act plays totalling some 2 hours in length. It is the hope of the drama club to prepare a complete 3-act production during the winter and spring term. The one-acts will be performed for the public in January, 1983. Watch for more details.

Librarian Dan Savage with Student Assistant Barb Schenk

Burlington, Redeemer College now has a hockey team, called the Redeemer "Royals." The team participates in a Christian non-contact hockey league, which is comprised of teams representing several area Christian Reformed Churches. To date, their record is perfect. They have not won yet! However, the hockey team, perhaps more than any other activity on campus, has done much to generate student enthusiasm, school spirit, and student community. Many of the students attend all of the hockey games, cheering on their team. The hockey team is coached by Mr. Douglas Buhlman, father of one of our students who lives in Hamilton.

The above gives a short outline of some of the extra-curricular activities at Redeemer College. However, they do not represent everything that is happening on- and off-campus. From time to time, various activities are planned and the college assists where it can in order to promote them. On one recent Friday night, the college provided transportation to a number of students who went to McMaster University to see a drama production. On another occasion, the bus was used to take a large number of students to Niagara Falls for the day. The trip ended with a soup and bun supper at the home of one of our students in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Every so often, Jim Berry will take the bus, with as many students as are interested, to a local pizza house or hamburger joint, in order to get away from the books for a while and let off some steam. Every Wednesday night, if there is enough interest, the bus is used to provide transportation for our students to the Burlington YMCA where they go swimming for an hour from 9:00-10:00.

Some reflections on a pioneer student body

When we started recruiting students, we looked at the first-year enrollments of Dordt College and Trinity Christian College. Both these institutions started with approximately 35 first-year students in their first year of operation. We carefully, but optimistically, set our goal for first-year students at 50. Secretly, we prayed for 75. When 97 students formally enrolled on September 2, 1982, it was indeed "way beyond expectations!"

Over the past year, I have gotten to know many of these young men and women on a personal basis. As I visited the various high schools, churches, and communities, I became more and more impressed with the calibre of young people that were considering Redeemer College.

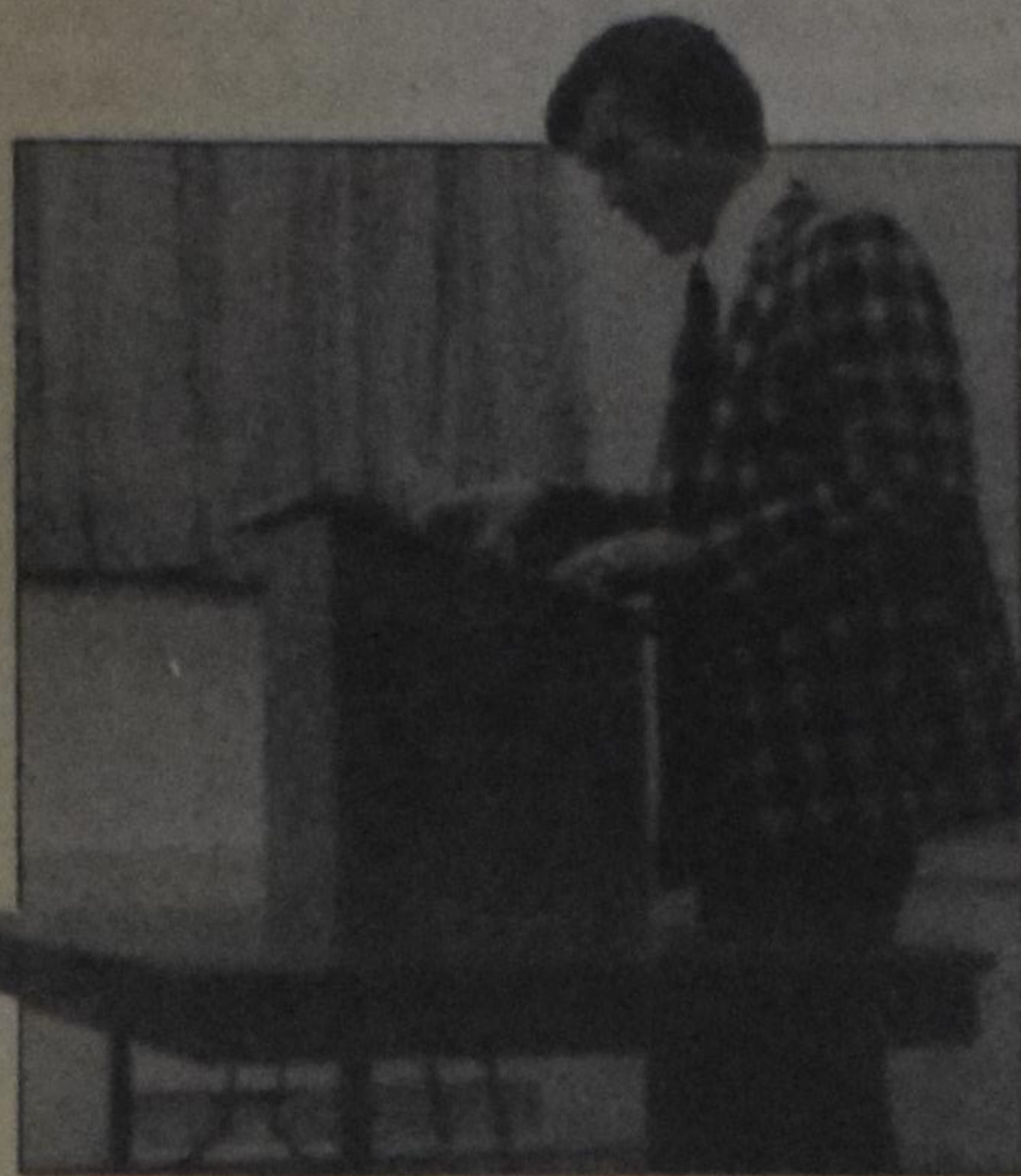
We speak often of those who took the plunge of faith with regard to starting Redeemer College. We think particularly of the small beginnings we had. 104 members when we started. We think of the professors who accepted appointments long before we knew where we would be and long before we had any students recruited. Each one of them felt called to this new challenge and they were prepared to make a commitment in faith. I think that says something about the calibre of faculty we have.

I think something of the same applies to our student body. These special young men and women made a commitment to coming to Redeemer College when for a long time they did not know where it was going to be. There were questions about facilities, library, credit transfer, housing and student employment. Yet, they made a commitment to come to Redeemer College and be part of the pioneer student body. In doing so, they forfeited in many cases the many appealing amenities available on the campuses of other post-secondary institutions. There was no beautiful, manicured campus and there were no multi-million dollar sports facilities and there were no dorms available, at least not in the traditional sense. Yet, these students captured some of the vision, faith and courage demonstrated by the faculty and they decided to come to Redeemer and form part of the pioneer student body.

School is now some 11 or 12 weeks old. There have been smiles and tears, there have been triumphs and joys. But, not for one minute has my appreciation for everyone of these special young men and women been diminished. They are a special group of people and we thank the Lord for every one of them!

Arend Kersten

Redeemer Extension Courses



Dr. John Bolt

Dr. John Bolt, Professor of Religion and Theology at Redeemer College, will be teaching an evening class entitled, "Introduction to the New Testament" every Thursday night from 7:00 - 10:00. The course begins on Thursday, January 6, 1983, and continues for 13 weeks. Extension students will be joining regular full-time students in these classes.

The cost for attending these classes is either \$398.00 if the student is taking the course for college credit, or \$199.00 if the student is taking the course on an audit basis.

An audit basis means that the

student can participate in class as any credit student, submit papers if he/she so desires and may (but does not have to) take the exams and tests. The student will receive a transcript from the college which indicates that the student has taken the course for audit, but it does not give official college credit, nor does it give a grade.

Students who take the course for credit will receive a transcript and they will receive official college credit for their efforts.

Part-time students who are members of supporting churches are eligible for a grant which they can subtract from the credit course fee of \$398.00. The grant which the student may receive is determined by the distance between the student's home and Redeemer College. If the distance is under 30 km, the grant is \$50.00 per course; if the student lives between 31-50 km from Redeemer College, the grant is \$62.50 and if the student lives over 50 km away from Redeemer College, the grant is \$75.00.

If you would like to participate in these courses, or in any of our daytime courses, why not contact Arend Kersten at the Student Affairs Office of Redeemer College, 467 Beach Boulevard, Hamilton, Ontario. L8H 6W8 ph. (416) 549-8024.

Stegeman appointed

Mr. Ben Stegeman of St. Catharines was recently appointed the Assistant Development Director in charge of fund raising. Mr. Stegeman's primary responsibility will be to raise the funds necessary to keep the doors of Redeemer College open. Specifically, he's in charge of the local campaigns held within our supporting churches.

Mr. Stegeman is married and has three children and lives in St. Catharines. He is a member of the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church of St. Catharines and currently serves as an elder.



Ben and Jane Stegeman with children John, Mark and Lori Anne.

REDEEMER COLLEGE

Subject to the approval of the Board of Governors, Redeemer College invites applications for faculty for the expansion of its program for 1983-84.

FULL-TIME

English • Business/Economics • Music • Mathematics

PART-TIME

Mathematics • Latin • Sociology • Drama • Music
Computer Science • French

The music and mathematics positions may be either full-time or part-time. In addition, applications are requested for positions in the **Students Affairs Department** and the **Library**. Those who wish to be considered for a full-time teaching position should hold the doctorate or its equivalent or should be nearing the completion of their degree. Inquiries should be sent to:

Justin Cooper, Acting Dean

REDEEMER COLLEGE

467 Beach Boulevard, Hamilton, ON L8H 6W8

Grassroots

If one word could be used to describe the fund raising strategy of Redeemer College, it would be the word "grassroots."

We at Redeemer College are committed to the understanding that our students will pay the larger part of our operating budget. For that reason, the tuition rate for our students is \$3980.00 for the current school year. With approximately 100 full-time equivalent students it means that the students will contribute approximately \$400,000.00 to the operating budget of Redeemer College for this year. The total operating budget for 1982-83 as adopted by our members last May is \$800,000.00. So you can see that students this year pay approximately half of the budget. As our enrollment increases, it is our goal that students will eventually pay between 70%-80% of our operating budget on an annual basis.

That leaves the question of the shortfall. During this school year, it's \$400,000.00. We agonized long and hard on how we could raise that amount of money. After a great deal of soul-searching, much prayer, discussion, and even some sleepless nights, we finally adopted a strategy which we think is responsible and Biblical.

Redeemer College is committed to being the College of God's people - all God's people in eastern Canada. In that way, we are trying hard to establish a support base much like the one the Free University in Amsterdam had when it started in the 19th century. Abraham Kuyper's philosophy of starting a university with the "Kleine Luyden" is what we seek to imitate.

To put this fund raising strategy into practical terms, we visited representatives from all of our supporting churches throughout Ontario and East-

ern Canada and asked permission to conduct a membership/support campaign within each of our supporting churches. We write the members of each of our churches and ask them to become supporters of Redeemer College with a small amount every month. Once the members have received the letter, they are visited by another member of the congregation for their response.

In the letter we send to all the members of these churches, we suggest support of \$10.00 a month (that's just \$2.50 per week). It is our feeling that most people can afford \$10.00 a month without jeopardizing local church and school support. At the same time, we recognize the unique circumstances of some individuals and therefore, if people can support us with \$7.50 per month or \$5.00 per month or even \$2.00 per month, they can still become full participating partners in Redeemer College. Conversely, those who have been uniquely blessed are challenged to give \$20.00, or \$30.00 or \$50.00 or even \$100.00 a month.

To date, the campaign has been completed in 11 churches. Already, support has increased from under 1,000 people to over 3,600. It is our hope that when the campaigns are completed throughout the churches, our support base will number about 5,000-6,000 persons and/or families.

If you have not yet been visited, it is likely that you will receive a letter from us before next summer and that you will be visited by a member of your congregation about Redeemer College. We sincerely encourage you to become a full participant in the great work of Redeemer College, and we invite you to become one of our supporters.

Statement of Basis and Principles

Our supreme standard is the Bible. These Scriptures, both Old Testament and New, reveal some basic principles relevant to education, which we affirm:

Scripture: The Scriptures are the written and inspired Word of God, the infallible and authoritative rule of faith for the direction of the whole of life.

Creation: God created and structured the universe in all its many ways by His Word. The meaning of the creation is focused in man, God's image-bearer, with whom He has established a special covenant relationship in Jesus Christ.

Sin: Man's disobedience, which brought God's curse upon all mankind, alienated man from his Creator, himself, his fellow man, and the rest of the creation; distorted his view of the meaning and purpose of life; and misdirected human culture and learning.

Redemption: Christ, the Word of God incarnate, is the only Redeemer, the Renewer of our whole life. He restores man and the rest of the creation to God and calls man back to his God-appointed task in the world.

Human life: Man is by nature a religious being. All of human life, including educational work, must be understood as a response to the one true God. Consequently, man serves either the Lord or a god of his own making.

Knowledge: True knowledge of God, ourselves, and the rest of the creation is made possible only by means of a true faith in Jesus Christ, in whom are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. True knowledge is attained only when the Holy Spirit enlightens men's hearts by the integrating Word of God and sets them in the truth. However, by God's gracious providence after the fall, those who reject the Word of God do provide many valuable insights into the structure of reality.

Teaching and Learning: In the context of their scholarship, the teachers of the College are called to lead students toward a deeper understanding of God's world and its history and to help them reach a cultural maturity grounded in Biblical faith. In order to carry out this calling, the teachers and students of the College should endeavour to discover God's laws and the structures of the creation so that the students may effectively take up their specific responsibilities and vocations in a way that will further the coming of the Lord's Kingdom.

We believe that this Statement of Basis and Principles is wholly in harmony not only with Scripture but also with the historic creeds of the Reformation.

I would like to become a member of the College. I am in agreement with the Statement of Basis and Principles.

NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PROVINCE: _____ CODE: _____ DATE: _____

I would like to become a member of the College. I am in agreement with the Statement of Basis and Principles.

NAME: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PROVINCE: _____ CODE: _____ DATE: _____

Enclosed is my support of \$ _____
(The membership fee is \$25.00. We respectfully request support of \$10.00 per month, per family or single wage earning individual.)

Please clip and return to:

REDEEMER COLLEGE

467 Beach Boulevard, Hamilton, ON L8H 6W8

Season's Greetings

BOUWERS: To all our relatives and friends we wish a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Ralph and Hanna Bouwers, Apt. #2305, 7900 McLaughlin Rd., Brampton, Ont.

BLEKKENHORST: Mr. and Mrs. G.J. Blekkenhorst and family wish all their friends and relatives a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

R.R.#3, Georgetown, ON L7G 4S6

BOLDERHEIJ: Mr. and Mrs. Bert Bolderheij with all their friends a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

565 Carrville Rd., Thornhill, ON L4J 1V3

BOUWMAN: Wij wensen alle vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en Nieuwjaar.

H. en G. Bouwman, Hope Tower, Brampton, Ont.

COLYN: Wishing all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and God's guidance in the New Year.

Bill and Margaret Colyn and family, Wellandport, Ont.

DE VRIES: Bill and Truus wish all their relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and 1983.

493 West Fifth, Hamilton, ON L9C 3P7

DE VRIES: Erna, Harry, Chad, Quentin, and Justin wish for their relatives and friends the peace of God for the season and in the coming year.

527 Glancaster, Mount Hope, ON L0R 1W0

DYKXHOORN: Ik wens al mijn familie, vrienden en kennissen een gezegend Kerstfeest en God's zegen in het nieuwe jaar.

Mrs. Karen Dykxhoorn, 157 Raylawn Cres., Georgetown, ON L7G 4M6

EYGENRAAM: We would like to wish our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Frank and Jahny Eygenraam, and Paul, R.R.#1, Belmont, ON N0L 1B0

FLUIT: Wij wensen al onze familie, vrienden en bekenden gezegende Kerstdagen en een voorspoedig Nieuwjaar.

Klaas en Hennie Fluit, 3260 New St., Apt. #101, Burlington, ON L7N 3L4

GOODHOOFD: Best wishes to all our friends for a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Herbert and Joan Goodhoofd, Stroud, Ont.

GUETTER: We wensen onze familie, vrienden en kennissen, een goede en moele Kerst toe, en Gods onmisbare zegen voor het komende jaar.

Mr. en Mrs. John Guetter, Sr., Clinton, Ont.

HESSELS: Klaas, Willemien and John are going to wish all their relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Wellandport, Ont.

HIEMSTRA: I wish all my relatives and friends the joys and blessings of Christmas and God's guidance throughout 1983.

Mrs. Audrey Hiemstra, 200 Westfield Dr., #105, London, ON N6H 2M4

HOFLAND: We wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and also the Lord's blessings for the coming year.

Frans and Gre Hofland, Mississauga, Ont.

HOUTMAN: We wish all our family, friends, and acquaintances a very blessed Christmas and happy New Year.

A special thanks to the many CSS clients who extended Christian hospitality to Harry. From Harry, Tine and children Houtman, Toronto, Ont.

KNIGHT: Mrs. Gertrude Knight wishes all her relatives, friends and church members a blessed Christmas and a happy and healthy 1983.

764 Welland Ave., Fenwick, Ont.

KOENEN: Wishing all my relatives, friends, staff and readers of Calvinist Contact a blessed Christmas and the Lord's blessing all through the year 1983.

Mrs. T. Koenen, Shalom Manor, Grimsby, ON L3M 4N5

KOOISTRA: Wij groeten al onze vrienden en familieleden in dit seizoen met de woorden van Toon Hermans (in: Ik heb het leven lief).

Vrede
Vrede is een kind dat glimlacht als je ernaar kijkt,

een weiland waar de jonge veulens grazen,
's avonds fijn naar huis toe fietsen op de dijk,
het hinkelhok, de hoepel, belien blazen.

Vrede is geen groene tafel maar een stille kracht,

geen systeem, geen plan dat wordt berekend of bedacht.

Vrede is opa die verliefd met oma danst,

vrede is de gloed die in vertrouwde ogen glanst,

vrede is een oud verhaal dat met een ster begint,

een stal, een houten kribbe ... en een kind.

Laat de vrede van het Christus Kind u begeleiden in het komende jaar.

Rem en Janette Koolstra, Waterloo, Ont.

MARISSSEN: Christmas greetings and the Lord's blessing for the coming year to family and friends.

Teun and Hennie Marissen, 19 Marchant St., Aylmer, ON N5H 1V5

MIEDEMA: Mrs. A. Miedema-Drewes wenst al haar familie, vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en een gelukkig Nieuwjaar.

Sunset Homes, Apt. #114, 2 White St., St. Catharines, ON L2N 1Z2

NAMINK: Mr. and Mrs. Peter Namink are going to wish all their relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

96 Ontario St., Georgetown, ON L7G 3L1

NYMEYER: We wish all our relatives and friends a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year.

John T. and Klazina Nymeyer, R.R.#2, Alma, ON N0B 1A0

RENKEMA: We like to wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and the Lord's guidance, and a blessing for the year 1983.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Renkema, Mount Brydges, Ont.

PASMA: Tom and Alice Pasma wish all their friends and relatives a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

R.R.#1, Springfield, Ont.

RHEBERGEN: We wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Gerald and Frances Rhebergen and family, R.R.#2, Tottenham, ON L0G 1W0

SIDERIUS: Instead of cards, Mr. and Mrs. John Siderius wish all relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and happy New Year.

Brampton, Ont.

STREUTKER: John and Tolly Streutker and family wish family and friends God's blessing for 1983.

R.R.#8, Woodstock, ON N4S 7W3

VALKENBURG: Albert and Jenny Valkenburg, thank God for all the blessings received in 1982. We wish our children, grandchildren, family, friends and customers from coast to coast a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

159 Ratterbury St., Box #643, Clinton, Ont.

VAN SOELEN: To all our friends and relatives a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Bert and Aleda Van Soelen and family, R.R.#2, Dunnville, ON N1A 2W2

VAN WYK: Sjoerd and Marion Van Wyk and boys, wish all their relatives, friends and neighbours a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

R.R.#3, Clinton, Ont.

VANDERWAL: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings ..."

(Isaiah 52:7). With this in mind, we wish all our friends and relatives God's blessing on Christmas and the coming New Year.

Dorothy and John VanderWal and family, Camlachie, ON N0N 1E0

VANDERZWAAG: We wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and may the Lord also be near to all in the year A.D. 1983.

Family Vanderzwaag, 15 Leland St., Hamilton, ON L8S 2Z8

VAN EEK: May the joy of Christ's presence be shared by all our friends as they seek God's Kingdom and his righteousness in the New Year of our Lord — Season's Greetings from Rev. Arie and Mrs. Ellen Van Eek and family.

VAN STAALDUINEN: Mr. John van Staalduinen wishes all his friends a blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year.

66 Canterbury Ave., Stoney Creek, ON L8G 3S6

WESSELIUS: Mr. and Mrs. W. Wesselius and sons wish their relatives, friends and neighbours everywhere a blessed Christmas and Yew Year.

10 Liberty St., Bowmanville, ON L1C 2L4

ZIJLSTRA: Wij wensen alle familie, vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en een gelukkig Nieuwjaar toe.

Paul en Wilhelmina Zijlstra, 3260 New St., #206, Maranatha Homes, Burlington, ON L7N 3L4

Songs of Gladness

A perfect Christmas package by the Hamilton area male chorus

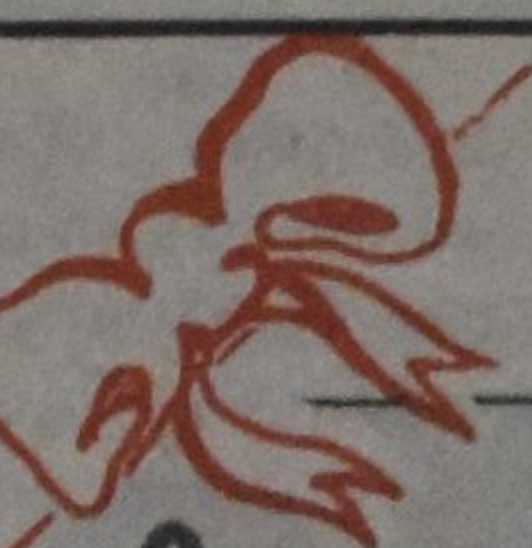
The Ambassadors

* religious and popular numbers

* includes selections Dvorak, Dordt's Dale Grotenhuis and Vaughan Williams

\$10 prepaid

The Ambassadors/Obe Mobach
139 Patterson Ave.
Dundas, ON L9W 5V1
(416) 528-0305



Songs of Gladness



Stories at Christmas

... that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught (Luke 1:4).

... Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:19).

This Christmas season will be no exception; everywhere there will be a retelling of The Story of Christmas. That story will occupy a foremost place in the life of the church. I am certain of it.

But just as certainly there will be other stories at Christmas that will occupy our lives and touch us; stories we all know something about: a lonely widow, a son or daughter killed or run away or no longer believing, a lonely marriage, diseases that will not quit, a faltering widower, a man or woman hurt to the core but unable or unwilling to share, a family with wounds, a church with fellowship fission - a multitude of stories that will compete with an too often dominate The Story of the season.

These are the stories that can stifle the joy of any celebrating we might like to do. We want so much to experience the truth of the angels' announcement of peace and the good favour of the Lord on us to undo the misery that we sometimes cannot even tell anyone about or even describe. The pain of private suffering surpasses often the pleasure of the holiday season, Christmas time can sometimes make it appear worse.

Somehow, though, we can know the certainty of The Story of Christmas again this year. Luke in writing his gospel to Theophilus speaks of the need for him to have an orderly account (vs. 3) to put into good and proper perspective all the things "this most excellent" man may have heard.

We are not told if Theophilus believed or lived to praise the Lord. We are perhaps beyond the need for just an orderly account; yet, we need to know the certainty of the things we have already been taught. How certain for us is the hope of the Christmas story, the hope of the incarnation, God becoming truly human so that we might become truly human again? This meaning will have to stay close for keeping and pondering.

How can we break the power of the stories we have with us at Christmas so we can hear and enjoy more fully The Story of the Christ of this and all the seasons? Could it be as simple as to listen to the accounts of the Gospels, to hear the Good News preached again, to sing the songs of the season, to hear its other music, to join in the traditional or innovative ways of celebrating, to praise the God whose love and power is declared in the incarnation?

I recognize that this may at first seem a trite answer to the question posed. Yet when the praise to God fills us, when the amazing, startling fact of the incarnation touches us as it will, in the worship done at Christmas, it is then that the bonds of our other stories can be broken. Certainly not apart from communication with Him.

Keep and ponder with certainty that The Story of Christmas will surpass all the other stories we will have to live with this season too. Keep and ponder with certainty the glorious account that God came to undo our stories with The Story of His love and power in Christ!

John Tenyenhuis

John Tenyenhuis is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Montreal, Quebec.

A gentile at the manger

John H. Martens

The two caravan roads meeting just to the south of Bethlehem, only a stadium or two from town, have seen much traffic throughout the millennia. The road leading to the North has often served as a military highway, when the armies of the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt in the South erupted from the land of the Nile to do battle with the Hittites or Assyrians. Aeons of time ago the carts of the Philistines rumbled down this road to invade Egypt. And always travellers and merchants with smaller or larger caravans of pack animals followed the North-South route. It was also along this road, that Joseph, the son of Jacob, wearily trudged his way to Egypt, when he had been sold near Dothan by his envious brothers.

South of Bethlehem another road crosses the route to North. This road, leading from the fords of the river Jordan to the ports along the sea coast of Palestine, connects the Mediterranean with the lands across the deserts in the East, with Babylonia and the largely unknown regions, still farther to the East.

Lately, since the Romans have been in control of Palestine, a military stronghold has been built near the strategic crossroads. Not an enormous fort, but nevertheless a fortress large enough to accommodate a hundred armed men, enough to keep an eye out for bandits who sweep intermittently down from their hideouts to the East on the peaceful caravans, following the dusty highway.

Calpurnius is one of the Roman officers in command of the fort and its troops. He joined the army, when he was twenty and has been posted ever since at the Roman stronghold just South of Bethlehem in Palestine. Here, his wife was able to join him. It was also here that their two children were born.

And where could they have found a more scenic place to live than here in rural Judea? Here, one of the undoubtedly most striking natural settings in the whole of Palestine unfolds before their eyes. In the East, the crags of the central Judean mountain massifs rise ever higher until the summits in winter covered in snow, fade in the distance. To the West, at the foot of the crossroads fortress, the undulating, imperceptibly sloping fields of Ephrata dotted with large flocks of sheep, their white sharply contrasting under the blazing sun with the dark green of the succulent meadows, stretches into the distance. And beyond, far out to the West, along the coast of the Mediterranean, the air simmers with heat. Here in the ancient Philistine country, the vineyards and olive groves extend almost to the beaches of the sea.

Calpurnius is a man, who cannot but be spellbound by the manifestations of nature. Often he inquires of the shepherds, who attend to the flocks of

sheep and goats, about some aspects of the fauna or flora of the grassy hills of Judea. Gradually Calpurnius becomes a familiar figure to the Judean shepherds. True enough, he is a Roman soldier, but one who often listens attentively to the tales and stories of the shepherds. In time Calpurnius is accepted as almost a friend by the shepherds, who know by now that this Roman soldier is a warm human being, interested in the beauties and nature of their homeland.

Once during an evening Calpurnius tarried even longer than usual at one of the night bivouacs of the shepherds. A sudden thunder storm - a rarity so late in the year - made him stay longer than he was wont to do. When finally the thunderclouds disappeared behind the mountains in the East and only a faint lightning far across the river Jordan marked the dying fury of the storm, it was pitch dark, too dark almost to go home.

Calpurnius decided to stay with the shepherds for the night. Julia was a stout-hearted woman and he knew she would not worry. She had not done so during another night of absence, when he had also passed the night outdoors, after he sprained his foot, chasing after the one-day old cub of a mountain lion, which had apparently been abandoned by its mother. The cub had eluded Calpurnius and he had passed the night the best he could. The next day he hobbled home.

And now he was to spend another night under the stars by a shepherd's campfire. An unforgettable night ... for Calpurnius and for all humanity.

The thunderstorm was followed by a great hush. Nature seemed to hold its breath and only the faint gurgling of some rivulets running down the hills after the recent storm was audible, while occasionally a young lamb called for its mother.

Close by the fire the shepherds were speaking of the past and of their hopes for the present. Like their forefathers before them, they awaited the coming of the Messiah, who would lead their beloved Jewish nation to new heights of glory.

Suddenly something happened.

Calpurnius could hardly retell it afterward. A mighty array of apparently supernatural beings - the shepherds excitedly called them angels - descended from an opening sky, ablaze with an unearthly light.

In perfect order and in closed formation the angels came close to the humble campfire of the shepherds. They sang in front of the stunned shepherds in jubilant words about the birth of the long-awaited Messiah, who at that very moment had come down to a sinful and cold world as a little baby in nearby Bethlehem.

Calpurnius hardly dared to gaze up, but despite himself, he marvelled at the sight of these angels, whose song



was so rousing and yet so melodious and perfectly musical. He was able to understand what they had sung. One of the angels was especially articulate and Calpurnius gazed at him. The angel returned his glance and with a crescendo he proclaimed that the newly born Messiah was to bring peace; Gloria in altissimis deo et in terra pax, hominibus bona complacentia. Calpurnius never forgot these words.

Then the heavenly host retreated and when the last one reentered the momentarily opened sky, only the echo of their stirring song seemed to linger. Everything was soon as before and the rivulets still gurgled and the lambs still bleated, but the most news-worthy news bulletin of all time had been issued.

The shepherds looked for a moment at each other in the glow of the campfire and their eyes betrayed their excitement. So great was their joy at the news that the Messiah had come at long last and was born in a humble stable, adjacent to the local inn in Bethlehem, that they spontaneously set out to the little city, to, if possible, find the newborn King and bring homage to the infant prince. They even forgot about the sheep entrusted to their care.

Calpurnius suddenly found himself alone, sitting by a dying fire, while in the distance the excited voices of the shepherds faded away. But the urge to see for himself whether the angels had spoken the truth when they announced, that the young King could be found in a stable with a manger for his crib, made him jump up. Soon he caught up to the shepherds on their way to Bethlehem.

It was still dark when they had hurried through the otherwise deserted streets of the city of David, the shepherds out front and Calpurnius following closely. Their footsteps sounded eerily and hollow through the alleys of the still sleeping town and a lone dog barked at the interruption of the predawn calm.

The shepherds must have known intuitively where to find the little King. Soon Calpurnius and his friends found themselves in a complex of stables where many horses and mules were put up, for it was a busy time in Bethlehem. An official census was to be held and the town was full of people, many from afar, who were required to register in the hometown of their forefathers.

The shepherds made their way through the complex to a separate stall

Continued on page 20

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A gift for your fat friend

Dorothy Siebert

This year, give your fat friend a gift he can really use. It'll strengthen your friendship without costing you a cent! It's the gift of support.

To the fat person (overweight is a euphemism) Christmas can be less than a joyous occasion. The festive season looms like the jaws of an oversized trap. All too often that first handful of salted nuts triggers the spring and the fat person is caught up in his old habit of compulsive eating. January brings the post-Christmas blues. A reluctant glance at the scale shows that those hard-lost pounds have returned. It's the same old story and he's the villain. Again. But you can help.

The "fat is beautiful" slogan of the early seventies died quickly. Today "fit", not "fat", is in. And the fat person knows it. Our churches, too, are waking to the fact that self-control is a fruit of the Spirit and that Christians have crucified the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:24). More likely than not, your fat friend is wrestling with his weakness, just as you are wrestling with your pride or your gossip habit. He may be trusting the Lord to help him resist the temptations of the season. Your encouragement to yield "just this one time" may be a wicked dart hurled at his spirit.

Do your cream-filled tortes get rave reviews? Are your silver trays heaped with a rich cookie assortment? Or are you just a good mama who likes to see her family well-fed? Whoever you are, you can give your fat friend, or family member, one of the following gifts. Although very personal, they will suit any age and either sex:

1. *Give the gift of prevention.* Relieve the tension of the ever-present candy dish. Have it in an out-of-the-way place and pass it around once or twice. The fat person can resist momentarily but finds it difficult to ignore sweets stationed at his elbow.

2. *Give the gift of choice.* Ask around the table whether everyone wants a dessert. Don't create huge desserts in the kitchen and deliver them with the coffee. The fat person may want a choice as to whether he'll have one, and also a request regarding its size.

3. *Give the gift of camaraderie.* If you know for certain your fat dinner guest is attempting to cut down, try not to gorge yourself or rave about your favourite foods. Take moderate amounts and eat slowly. Your fat friend will be encouraged to do the same. Two are better than one (Ecc. 4:9).

4. *Give the gift of silence.* There is no virtue in "cleaning your plate." Contrary to

what we teach our children, "finishing up" our food when hunger has already waned will not increase your rapport with the starving millions. What hostess hasn't begged, "Let's finish this, it'll be no good tomorrow"? Maybe this season we can surprise everyone with our silence at the close of a meal.

5. *Give the gift of acceptance.* You have laboured over the lacy frosting on the star-shaped cookies. And look at those hot raspberry turnovers - they were hours in the making. Your homemade candies? Why, you've poured your heart into their creamy centres! And now your fat friend speaks a flat "no"? Don't argue. Revealing how wounded you feel will cut through all his willpower. He will have to eat to soothe your feelings. Let him know you respect his decision.

These gifts will suit anyone, but there is one pitfall to be wary of. They are so attractive you may want to hand them out indiscriminately. That would really ruin the Christmas spirit. Try not to force these gifts on a fat friend (or spouse) who doesn't want them. You, the wise friend will know. With these gifts, more than ever, it's the thought that counts.

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The Alpha and Omega

*There is At one ment with our maker and King.
In Bethlehem where the Angels did sing:
A Choir from God, that great heavenly Host,
Announcing Heavens Door as in Scripture proposed.
Eternal God and yet Son of man,
Born from the Father, out of Jesse's old stem.
Glory in the Highest, Eternal peace below:
Heavens gift of grace on finite earthlings bestow.
Irresistable Grace, yet no special room for Him made;
Jesus the Saviour in a lowly manger was laid.
King of all kings, came with sinners to dwell,
Living our life, so to ransom from Hell.
Mercy and pardon to all who receive
Naught but this Saviour, in childlike belief.
Jesus Obtained, grants fully and free.
Peace and God's mercy to you and to me.
Quench then your thirst at this fountain of life.
Rely on His promise, flee sin, and all strife.
Spirit of God, dwell within me, forever abide.
Teach me, and mold me, make me fit for your Bride.
Unconditional Election, yet one can only obtain.
Victory through faith, ever trusting His name.
Witness for Him then, in words and in deeds.
As this Xmas again, we view all mankind's needs.
Yahweh be praised, let the earth shout and raise.
Her praises to Zion, till the closing of days.*

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Dutch

Wat heeft het kind ons nog te zeggen?

Wat heeft het Kerstkind ons in deze dagen nog te zeggen?
Is er een lichte hemel vol met engelenzang?
En wordt de Heer nooit moe het altijd maar
weer uit te leggen
Aan mensen zoals wij, elk jaar opnieuw al eeuwen lang?

Of zou het zo zijn, dat wij leven in een eigen wereld
van zoete schijn, waar alle lichten zijn gedoofd,
waar we die ander in het donker haast
niet kunnen vinden,
omdat men in het licht van vrede toch niet meer gelooft?

Zijn wij de herders die op weg zijn om dat kind te zoeken?
Buigen wij ons in het duister bij de kribbe neer?
Als wij het vinden, 't is gekleed in schamele doeken.
Dan wordt het licht om ons, dan horen wij
de engelen weer.

Dan gaan onze aarzelende handen weer tasten, zoeken.
Niet meer in 't donker maar in 't licht van onze Heer
naar mensen onderweg, elk met zijn
eigen angsten, lasten
Vinden elkaar in Bethlems stal dan bij de kribbe weer.

Dan heeft het Kerstkind ons toch deze
dagen wat te zeggen.
Er is een lichte hemel vol van engelenzang.
Er is een Heer die nooit te moe is het weer uit te leggen
aan mensen zoals wij ... die vaak zo moe zijn en zo bang.

Janny Alberts-Hofman
in "Gods glimach", Kok, Kampen



Als je 't

mij vraagt

Hoe denk jij over de Canadese
kerstfeestviering?

Syrt Wolters

Is dat niet eigenlijk een vraag uit de oude doos? Was dat niet een vraag die meer aan de orde was in de dagen van nieuw inkomende immigranten? De meeste immigranten van de Gereformeerde gezindte vonden dat de Canadezen er maar wat van maakten. Vooral dat gevee van kadoos stuitte veel povere immigranten tegen de borst. Het was dan ook zo geheel anders dan men in Nederland gewend was. En het schijnt bij de menselijke natuur te behoren om alles waaraan men gewend is te idealiseren en, zelfs wanneer het niet helemaal deugt, goed te praten.

Als jongen kan ik me goed herinneren dat ik er als een berg tegen opzag als de eerste kerstdag op maandag of dinsdag viel of in het eind van de week op donderdag of vrijdag. Want dan werden we verplicht om in een korte spanne tijds vijf keer naar de kerk te gaan, toen de diensten nog op z'n minst anderhalf uur duurden. Onder dominees werd die periode wel eens de "vierdaagse" genoemd. Ik kan

moelijk geloven dat onze tegenwoordige dominees daar nog voor te porren zijn. Ik zou het hen ook niet kwalijk nemen, tenslotte men kan ook teveel van het goede krijgen.

Goed - we deden niet aan dat kadootjes gevee, maar daar hadden we Sinterklaas voor, of niet?

In ons eigen gezin hebben we er nooit toe kunnen komen om mee te doen aan het geven van kerstcadeaus. Maar ja, hoe reageren je kinderen daar op? Tenslotte die groeien op in een Canadese cultuur. Tot nu toe hebben we het klaar gespeeld om de gewoonte van het geven van kerstgeschenken de deur uit te houden. We hebben zo onze eigen gewoonte van geschenken geven. We vieren nog een beetje Sinterklaas, maar dan niet op 6 december, maar op de laatste dag van school voor de kerstvacantie.

In de loop der jaren hebben we de kinderen goed ingepeperd dat het geven van cadeautjes op Sinterklaas niets met kerstfeest te maken heeft, maar dat het nog een overblijfsel is van onze oude gewoonte in Nederland om een pret avond te hebben als gezin. Sinterklaas was voor ons nooit meer dan dat. Het had geen enkel verband met Kerstfeest of wat godsdienstig felt dan ook. St. Nicolaas mag dan een bisschop van Hippo geweest zijn, die veel goed deed aan arme kinderen, zoals de encyclopediën ons vertellen, maar ik geloof niet dat iemand van ons daar ooit aan dacht. Sinterklaas was een avond plezier en pret.

Dat feit proberen we nog vast te houden, hoofdzakelijk geloof ik opdat onze kinderen dan niet zo heel erg afsteken bij hun klasgenoten die

Ja, dit wordt toch weer een kerstverhaal, compleet met feest en een dure boom! Ik kan het niet laten. 't Is zelfs een verhaal over een kerstfeest van de rijken! (of toch niet?)

Als u het niet lezen wilt, slaat u 't maar over. Leest u het, en weet u nog wat bidden is, bid dan voor Amahl, want ik ben zijn spoor bijster.

De Nederlanders behoren tot de "rijken van Libanon"; toen in december in 1974, en als ze er nu nog wonen óók nu.

De kerkgemeenschap kwam bij elkaar om Nederlands te kunnen spreken, en misschien (zo hoopt de predikante) ook nog om wat anders.

De catechisatie werd gehouden in het mooie huis van de landbouwtaché, elke donderdag van vijf tot zes. De jongste kinderen waren een jaar of vier, de oudsten niet ouder dan twaalf en vaak kwamen ze zelfs uit Tripoli.

Hun ouders vertegenwoordigden elke kerkelijke kleur of helemaal geen kleur. De vaders verdienden goed en meer dan goed: Philips, Shell en K.L.M. zorgden voor huizen en verstrooling. De kinderen hadden niet alleen alles wat hun hartje begeerde, maar meer dan dat. Er waren er niet zo heel veel, want goede scholen zijn schaars en duur en bovendien is er het talenprobleem.

Dat lossen ze overigens vlugger op dan hun ouders. Ze speelden ook met Libanese kinderen, hoewel het ons opviel dat ze genoten van het samen-zijn met andere Nederlandse kinderen. Bijbelverhalen werden gespeeld en met behulp van een grammofoonplaat zongen ze uit de proefbundel van het Liedboek.

Het kerstfeest was een hoogtepunt,

al was de Libanese kerstboom niet "echt" volgens de Nederlandse kinderen.

Er waren zondagsschoolboekjes overgevlogen als gift voor de kinderen, die toch al kerstcadeaus bij de vleet kregen. De traktaties waren overvloedig; het huis in de donkere regentijd veilig, sfeervol en warm. En ruim genoeg! Alle ouders kwamen.

Vaders zongen de nooit vergeten kerstliederen met de baby's op schoot. Moeders vergaten het heimwee.

Maar aan de overkant ... Daar lag achter een bos verscholen de krankzinnigeninrichting van Libanon, een barakkencomplex voor honderden geestelijk gestoorde.

Een slagboom hield bezoekers tegen. De kinderen kwamen er langs als ze naar catechisatie gingen. In de wachthokjes hield het leger de wacht over de vaak onrustige kudde. En daar woonde ook Amahl ...

Amahl was een uiterst begaafde alleenstaande man van een Christen-familie in Jordanie. Hij werd in het ziekenhuis waar ik werkte, verpleegd en ik kende hem al tien jaar.

Hij had t.b.c. gehad, was alcoholist en ook uiterst vreemd. Honderden klassieke grammofoonplaten had hij in zijn bezit. Zijn kamer in het ziekenhuis mocht nooit worden schoongemaakt. Amahl kweekte spinnen en kwam tot razernij als er iets uit de kamer werd verwijderd. Lege sigarettendozen bij duizenden, voedsel, drankflessen en wat al niet meer, waren min of meer ordelijk in zijn kamer opgesteld.

Voor wie hem kende, was hij een bijzondere geest met een fabelachtig geheugen. Hij was de neef van een minister, had muziek gestudeerd, bleek niet onbemiddeld en had een

Wanneer hebben wij u in de gevangenis gezien?

Joke van Mierlo-van Kuipers



zaakwaarnemer, zijn enige vriend. Toch was hij in het ziekenhuis niet te handhaven en zo kwam hij in Asfourie (Vogeloord - "waar ze ze zien vliegen" zouden we zeggen). Houten barakken, kleine hokjes met een bed, verder niets.

Op hetzelfde terrein de gevangenis, waar Hollanders die drugs gesmokkeld hadden, soms met andere vreemdelingen maandenlang op de uitspraak van het vonnis wachtten.

De vrouw van de attaché bracht er soms eten en ik bezocht na zijn vertrek uit het ziekenhuis Amahl. Eerlijk gezegd met wat angst voor zijn medepatienten, die door de gangen

liepen en geen enkele verstrooling kenden.

Drank werd binnengesmokkeld en Amahl had 'm meer dan eens om en begroette mij hoffelijk of vloekend vanuit het raam van zijn hokje.

Aan de kinderen van de attaché die mij naar Amahl zagen gaan had ik wel eens iets verteld. Over Amahl die alles van muziek wist, allerlei data en telefoonnummers uit het hoofd kon opnoemen en nooit een geboortedatum vergat. Die de bijbel kende en liefhad, maar ziek was, erg ziek en eenzaam. Die nooit bezoek kreeg en het niet meer zag zitten in de wereld en

Dutch

allemaal natuurlijk vol trots hun kerstgeschenken laten zien.

Het Kerstfeest zelf wordt dan ook in de familiekring gevierd, ja, in een feeststemming. Tenslotte is het de geboortedag van onze Heiland, een verjaardag die meer voor ons betekent dan enig ander in de gehele familie. Zoveel mogelijk met onze kinderen en kleinkinderen om ons heen, maakt deze dag wel dubbel tot een feestdag.

Maar ik ben er niet zo erg zeker van dat deze gewoonte de tand des tijds zal doorstaan. De neiging is er dat we als nieuwe Canadezen "doen als de Romeinen" doen.

En dit brengt me op een ander punt. Is het eigenlijk niet te betreuren, dat we ons gedrag als Christen laten bepalen door wat de wereld om ons

Niet alleen is onze kerstfeestviering geseculariseerd...

heen doet? Wat maakt ons Christen-zijn eigenlijk uit in de wereld? Hoe staan we als Christenen bij de wereld bekend? Is het ons bepaald gedrag in de wereld? Is het niet zo dat de wereld ons, Christenen identificeert bij de vraag naar welke kerk we gaan? En dat het daarmee ophoudt?

Als ik de geschiedenis van de Christenen lees zoals die in de Handelingen en de brieven beschreven wordt, dan krijg ik sterk de indruk dat de Christenen in de Nieuw Testamentische dagen bekend waren als "mensen van die weg". Dit idee, dat Christenen mensen waren die er een totaal eigen levenswijze op na

hielden. We treffen dat idee aan door heel de Handelingen en in de brieven.

Christenen waren aanhangers van "de weg des Heren". Die levenswijze kwam duidelijk uit in allerhande praktische dingen. Politiek gesproken, weigerden ze om de keizer als god te erkennen. Economisch hadden ze het eigenaardig idee, dat men moest werken om in staat te zijn om aan de behoeftigen mee te delen (Ef. 4:28).

Sociaal gesproken vormde men een stevig saamgevoegde groep, vaak met elkaar delend. Sommigen gingen zelfs zo ver dat ze persoonlijke bezittingen gingen verkopen om in de behoeften van hun mede Christenen, die arm waren, te voorzien (Handelingen 2: 45). En in hun beroep had men de vreemde opvatting dat een werkmans zo moest werken alsof zijn baas Jezus zelf was (Ef. 6:5)! En als het op ethiek in het leven aankwam waren ze een stralend voorbeeld. Ze stonden bekend voor het feit dat ze elkander zo lief hadden! De apostel Petrus beschrijft die groep mensen als een "uitverkoren geslacht, een koninklijk priesterschap, een heilige natie, een volk Gods ten eigendom, om de grote daden te verkondigen van hem, die u uit de duisternis heeft geroepen tot zijn wonderbaar licht ...!"

Kent de wereld de Christenen van deze tijd ook zo? Steken wij ook zo af tegen de wereld? De vraag stellen is haar beantwoorden. Wij hebben ons heel aardig aangepast aan de gewoonten en zeden van de wereld. In veel opzichten viëren wij het kerstfeest precies zo als de wereld om ons heen. Zelfs in onze Christelijke bladen en

tijdschriften worden we aangemoedigd om dit of dat als kerstgeschenk te laten dienen.

En als het aankomt op de praktische dingen waarvan Handelingen en de brieven spreken, komen we er heel

... een heel grootdeel van ons bestaan is doordrenkt met humanistisch gedoe.

bekaaid af. Politiek gesproken zien we geen andere oplossing dan mee te gaan met de humanistische methode. Het beste wat we er van weten te maken is te stemmen voor iemand die voor Christen doorgaat. En die vindt men in alle vier partijen, zodat in het proces de Christelijke stem gewurgd wordt. Economisch denken we vrijwel hetzelfde als de wereld: Wat zit er in voor mij? Van je leven het beste te maken, bestaat hoofdzakelijk in het bemachtigen van een goed betaalde baan of beroep. O, en dan kan er natuurlijk ook wel wat af voor de armen, maar dat is niet de inzet. En

wie ziet naar zijn baas alsof hij Jezus zelf was? Is dat niet de dwaasheid gekroond? En staan wij echt in de wereld bekend als een groep mensen met een eigen levensstijl, die vooral gekenmerkt worden door het feit dat we elkander zo lief hebben?

Misschien dekt de bovengenoemde vraag: Hoe ik denk over de Canadese kerstfeestviering, niet helemaal wat ik in dit praatje gezegd heb. 'k Heb niet zozeer op de kerstfeestviering van de Canadezen de aandacht getrokken, maar meer wat wij, als na-oorlogse immigranten er van gemaakt hebben. En dan geloof ik dat niet alleen onze kerstfeestviering geseculariseerd is in Canada, maar dat een heel groot deel van ons bestaan doordrenkt is met dat humanistisch gedoe. Het wordt meer dan tijd, dat we ons weer bewust gaan worden dat we een "uitverkoren geslacht zijn; een koninklijk priesterschap, een heilige natie, en een volk dat aan God toebehoort om door onze levensstijl de grote daden te verkondigen van hem die ons uit de duisternis heeft geroepen tot zijn wonderbaar licht ...!"

Begint u doof te worden?

Wij testen uw gehoor in uw eigen huis als u binnen een straal van 70 mijl van Hamilton woont.

Schrijf of bel:
Fred Grootenboer
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Hamilton, ON - Tel: 388-8824

daardoor het drinken niet kon laten.

Toen naderde weer het kerstfeest. Ineke's kinderen, Marieke en Egbert, namen het initiatief. Ze praatten met de K.L.M.-kinderen Hans en Erik, en met de jongetjes Gras uit Tripoli, wier vader bij de Shell werkte. De twaalf kinderen beweerden: "Wij hoeven heus geen cadeaus, we willen een feest geven voor de mensen achter de slagboom. Wij willen naar Amahl! En er moet een echte kerstboom komen. Uit Holland. We keren onze spaarpotten om"

Ik twijfelde, sprak met de ouders en met de Engelse directrice van Asfourie. Dacht aan de opstand die er eenmaal op het terrein was geweest. Een personeelstaking waarbij men niet beter had geweten dan de barakken af te sluiten. Wel was er water geweest daarbinnen, maar geen eten, vier dagen lang

Ouders en staf sloegen de handen ineens. Waarom zou het kerstplan niet kunnen slagen?

De kinderen gingen creatief te werk. Ze maakten versierselen voor de boom, maar daar ze wisten dat glinsterende gekochte ballen en slingers het zouden winnen, brachten ze een offer uit de spaarpotten en gingen naar de Amerikaanse store.

Het kerstlied dat in Beirut weken voor kerst uit de luidsprekers galmde en voor de Libanezen "het" is, 't geliefdste en bekendste met Arabische tekst en melodie, werd in het Hollands vertaald. Ze konden haast allen een mondje Arabisch spreken, maar niet in het hoog Arabisch zingen. Daarom werd het dit:

Een Arabisch kerstlied met Nederlandse tekst dat we zingen voor de zieken.

Feest van het jaar! Alles is klaar! Ieder is blij, ouders en wij zingen met de eng'len mee en houden van elkaar.

Feest van de Heer! Ieder jaar weer daalt de liefde en de vrede in de harten neer.

Ah ah! Welkom! zeggen wij. Maak ons allen vrij!

Hoor de klokken luiden blij.

Met de eng'len zingen wij:

Geef God de eer!

Hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah!

Dat toch heel de wereld luister

naar de dringend zachte stem

van de Heer, die in de kribbe

lag in 't stadje Bethlehem.

Salaam, salaam, salaam! (vrede!)

Iedereen leerde die top hit van de kinderen, want de ouders zouden mee. Amahl werd op de hoogte gebracht. Hij zou de kinderen buiten mogen ontvangen. Laat de zware regentijd nog een dag wachten. Laten er sterren mogen schijnen in de kerstnacht!

Er was in die ruime kamer geen boom, geen lekkers, alleen kaarsen die de kindergezichten beschenen die achter de kathedr de woorden van Jezus lazen:

"Laat uw licht schijnen voor de mensen, opdat zij uw goede werken zien en uw Vader, die in de hemel is, verheerlijken."

Maar vooral blijft deze tekst mij bij van Johanneke, die het zo opzei, alsof ze het absoluut begreep ...

"Here, wanneer hebben wij u hongerig gezien, of dorstig, of als vreemdeling of naakt of ziek of in de gevangenis?"

Vragend klomk die heldere stem en daarna het antwoord:

"Voorwaar ik zeg u, in zoverre gij dit aan een van deze minsten gedaan

hebt, hebt gij het ook aan mij gedaan!"

En toen gingen we op weg in de donkere avond, naar Amahl. De boom stond buiten in het portiek van het huis van de attaché met de takken nog opgevouwen. Heel groot en heel zwaar, zo van het vliegveld hierheen gebracht. Hij kostte veel geld en wie dit leest verklaart ons misschien voor gek.

Zingend trokken we de straat langs, geflankeerd door de vaders, terwijl de moeders thuis op de kleintjes pasten. Lantaarns verlichtten de vele bleke gezichten achter de barakramen.

De directrice kwam naar buiten en ook Amahl in zijn oude kamerjas. Zijn clochardhoofd onverzorgd maar de ogen stralend. De magere handen uitgestrekt, luisterend naar de kindersang, de Hollandse liedjes over Jezus, 't heilig Kind.

Maar toen de Arabische melodie weerklonk zong Amahl uit volle borst mee:

"Feest van het jaar,
hier staan wij klaar.
Zingen met de engelen mee
en houden van elkaar!"

Peter vouwde langzaam de takken van de grote boom open. Het leek haast een eerbiedige handeling. Karen en Johanneke kwamen met dozen vol versierselen en pakten uit op de stoep. Hans en Erik brachten de traktaties voor allemaal.

Toen klomk het antwoord van achter die vele getraliede vensters: "Bis-salaam," (Stille nacht), het lied dat iedere natie kent.

Amahl droeg de boom naar de hal, hij sleepte hem met zijn zwakke krachten naar binnen. In de verlichte hal zagen we de slome en de hyper-actieve patienten in de weer met de versierselen.

"Het mooiste kerstfeest dat we ooit

hebben beleefd!" zeiden de kinderen wijs. De ouderen zagen elkaar in de ogen. Waren ze 't er mee eens?

Amahl raakte nooit over dat kerstfeest uitgepraat in het korte jaar dat volgde, vol schietpartijen, nood en gevaar. Eens zei hij: "Ik dacht dat ik mijn geloof verloren had, maar die avond kwam Jessoea met de kinderen mee en sprak mij aan."

Waar ben je nu Amahl? Niet meer in Asfourie, zegt men mij. In de oorlogsmaanden op drift geraakt ... Zou je misschien nog wel eens denken aan die kerstavond?

En jullie kinderen, die erbij waren en nu ook over de werelddelen zijn verspreid. Heb je het bandje nog met het avondlied dat we zongen in Ineke's grote kamer?

Nu deze dag ten einde gaat, geen zon meer licht verspreidt, slaapt al wat zich heeft afgemat en zich heeft moegeschreid. Er was er een, die nimmer sliep, die steeds zijn werk verricht. Hij haat het donker grondloos diep want hij is zelf het Licht.

Dit verhaal gaat over een opmerkelijke gebeurtenis tijdens de Kerst.

Bent u misschien ook getuige geweest van een bijzondere gebeurtenis of nam u deel aan een roerend evenement dit jaar dat openbaar gemaakt zou moeten worden? Schrijf ons dan.

Overgenomen uit: "Nieuw gezinsboek voor Kerst", J.N. Voorhoeve, 1982. Andere boeken in de serie zijn: Gezinsboek voor Kerstmis, Kerstboek, Kerstboek voor kinderen, Nieuw Kerstboek voor kinderen, Paasboek. Ze zijn verkrijgbaar bij Spielman's Bookhouse in Toronto.

Travel

Vanaf

\$649

HET ENIGE DAT DEZE WINTER LAGER ZAL ZIJN DAN DE TARIEVEN VAN DE KLM* IS DE TEMPERATUUR!

Profiteer deze winter van het speciale CCF-tarief van KLM voor vluchten naar Nederland. U kunt vanuit Toronto of Montreal vertrekken vanaf 1 november 1982 tot en met 24 maart 1983. U kunt terugkomen wanneer U maar wilt tot en met 31 maart 1983. Dankzij de speciale CCF-tarieven deze winter, kunt U een minimum van 7 dagen en een maximum van twee maanden in Nederland doorbrengen. Als U langer wilt blijven (maximum 6 maanden), belt U ons dan even op voor onze gewone CCF-tarieven.

GRATIS HUURAUTO

U bespaart nog meer geld met KLM dankzij een gratis huurauto in Amsterdam. Wij geven u er een voor een maximum van twee weken, met 100 kilometer gratis per week.

Een gul onthaal in Nederland

Dankzij een gratis 'Welcome back'-pakket (ter waarde van \$100) zult U zich meer dan ooit tevoren thuis voelen in Nederland. Prachtige geschenken, kortingen en bonussen met o.a. een pas voor een dag gratis openbaar vervoer en nog veel meer! U hoeft alleen maar vooruit te boeken.

Boek nu en spaar geld!

Vlieg deze winter naar huis met de KLM. De besparingen en kortingen waren nooit beter in Nederland. En denk eraan, dat U met onze gewone CCF-tarieven ook geld bespaart. Bel vandaag nog even Uw reisagent op!



De betrouwbare Hollandse luchtvaart-maatschappij

*In samenwerking met CP AIR.

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THANKS

BATELAAN: Deeply moved by your continuing love and support for Andy and Tan Batelaan at the time when God called home His child and their daughter Gaby, I thank you all who surrounded Tan and Andy with your care. May the Lord bless you. Also on behalf of my children and grandchildren, sincerely,

C.E. van der Maas - van den Berg.
Cornelis Doppekkade 4",
1077 KK AMSTERDAM, the Netherlands.

ROFFEL: We are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us 50 good years together, and we would like to thank all of you who helped to make our 50th Wedding Anniversary such an unforgettable day. Mr. and Mrs. G. Roffel, Trenton, Ont.

BIRTHS

BAKKER: "Children are a great reward, a gift from God, in very truth."

Ted and Rene are grateful to our Lord, for making all things well, with the birth of their second born, a son, **BRIAN MATTHEW**, born November 15, 1982, weighing 9 lbs. 5 oz. A brother for Jessica. Happy grandparents are: Mr. and Mrs. H. Bakker of Smithers, BC, and Mr. and Mrs. T.J. Timmer of Duncan, BC.

Box #2666, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0

KEMPER: We, Ted and Liz, give thanks to God for entrusting into our care a son, **DENNIS TED**, born on November 20, 1982, weighing 7 lbs. 3 oz. A little brother for Benji and Brian. Dennis is the 15th grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. J. Bruining of Freelon, Ont., and 30th grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. J. Kemper of Waterdown, Ont.
R.R.#4, Dundas, ON L9H 5E4

ANNIVERSARIES

1942 1982

December 23
"I will not let you go, unless you bless me" (Gen. 32:26b).
With joy and thankfulness to God, we are happy to announce the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents,

WOBBE and PIETJE BYLSMA
(nee Venema)

We pray that God may continue to bless them and keep them in his care for many more years. Congratulations, Mom and Dad. With love from:

Theresa & Jim Brand; Marsha, Jamie, Tracey, Jennifer, Christine — Dashwood
Aukie & Chris Bylsma; Karen, Sheila, Adam, Vicki — Blyth
Wibbina & Gerald Toonk; Angela — Exeter

John & Ruby Bylsma; Mark, David, Rachel, Elizabeth — Auburn
Anne & Terry Kaastra; Michael, Bryan, Allan — Clinton
Cory & John Kuipers; Charlene, Pamela — Goderich
Pat Bylsma — London
Home address: R.R.#1, Blyth, Ont.

MARRIAGES

BERGHOUSE - VANDER PLOEG: Mr. and Mrs. Peter Berghouse of Frankston, Australia and Mr. and Mrs. John Vander Ploeg are pleased to announce the marriage of their children, **ROSEMARY and STUART**. They will pledge their love to one another before God and his people on December 18, 1982, the Lord willing, in the Frankston Ref. Church, Victoria, Australia. Future address: R.R.#2, Shallow Lake, ON N0H 2K0

ANNIVERSARIES

1942 1982

December 24
With thankfulness to the Lord and joy in our hearts, we wish to announce the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

JAN and JOHANNA DE ROODE
(nee Dam)

May God continue to bless them and keep them in his care. Congratulations and much love from your children and grandchildren:

Harriet & Harold Creighton — Orangeville, Ont.

Tina & Bert Wolting — Guelph, Ont.

Betty de Roode — St. Catharines, Ont.

and 5 grandchildren.
Home address: 29 London Rd., E., Guelph, ON N1H 2B2

1947 1982

December 18
We hope to celebrate with our parents and grandparents,

JACK and JOANNE THALEN
(nee Ootjers)

their 35th Wedding Anniversary. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and give them many more years together.

Congratulations Mom and Dad: Harry & Jenny Thalen — Guelph
Frank & Nellie Bergman — Guelph
Eric & Sandy Thalen — Nanaimo, BC

Jack & Jennifer Thalen — Guelph
John & Hilda Van Gysel — Guelph
Joanne Thalen & Bruce Adema (engaged) — Guelph
eleven grandchildren.

Home address: 82 Cedar St., Guelph, Ont.

Moordrecht Brampton
1932 1982

December 28
"Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).
With joy and thanksgiving to God, we wish to celebrate with our parents and grandparents,

JORIS (George)
and

LAURINA VANDERHAM
(nee Roodzand)

their 50th Wedding Anniversary. We are very thankful to the Lord for giving us such wonderful parents, and pray that he will continue to bless and keep them for many more years of happiness together.

With love and congratulations from your children and grandchildren: Alice & John Verkaik; John & Lou, Timothy, Dorothy, Nina — Chatham

John & Wanda Vanderham; Lance, Jo-Anne, Wayne — Hamilton
Peggy Toirkens; Lauraine, Josh — Brampton

Laura & Cliff McNally — Hamilton
Cora & Meindert Kalverda; Leona, Michael, Tanya, Lance — Brampton

Open house will be held on January 8, 1983, from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church, 63 Church St., E., Brampton, Ont.
Home address: Hope Towers, 7900 McLaughlin Rd., S., Apt. #2712, R.R.#10, Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

Share the news, happy or sad, with the C.C. family.

ANNIVERSARIES

Westerbork Smithville
1952 1982

December 4

"From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord" (Psalm 121:1b,2a).

With joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father, we are happy to announce the recent 30th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

GEORGE and FRANCES VOS
(nee Zwaagstra)

It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them in their lives together in the years to come. With love from their children and grandchildren:

Art & Tina Vos; Michelle, Sherry, Amanda

Jane & Adrian Vander Wier; Leona, Hugh, Gayle, Gerrit, Richard
Wilma Vos & Ron Acaster (fiance)
Lloyd Vos & Glenda Kiers (girl-friend)

George Vos
Paul Vos
John Vos
Jennifer Vos
Home address: R.R.#2, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

Alphen a/d Rijn Peterborough
1942 1982

"The Lord is our Shepherd" (Psalm 23).

It is with thanksgiving and gladness that we celebrate the 40th Wedding Anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

AARTJE LENA and WILLEM JACOBUS WYBENGA

on December 24, D.V.

There will be an opportunity to congratulate the happy couple in the basement of the Cephas Chr. Ref. Church on Goodfellow Rd., at Clonsilla, in Peterborough, Ont., on December 18, 1982, from 3-5 p.m. Best wishes only, please.

Joe & Gwen Wybenga; Warren — Oshawa

Mary & John Hosmar; Jim, Elaine, Philip — Oshawa

Bill & Rita Wybenga; Nicole, Leanne, Michael — Bramalea

Dick & Mary-Lou Wybenga; Andy, Tanya — Kingston

Home address: R.R.#8, Peterborough, Ont.

Rotterdam, Toronto,
Charlois Rexdale
1942 1982

December 23

With much joy and thankfulness to the Lord for our parents and grandparents, we rejoice with them in the celebration of their 40th Wedding Anniversary.

LEN and AUDREY ZWAAL
(nee Belder)

May the Lord keep you in his constant care for many more years together.

Love and congratulations from your family:

Ingrid & Richard Vandervinne; Yvonna, Melissa, Richard Jr., Lennard — Surrey, BC

Ada & Bruce Maas; Miranda, Jennifer, Bruce Jr., Amy — Brampton, Ont.

Tina & George Whittle; Matthew, Sarah, Rachel — Rexdale, Ont.

Open house at the family residence Saturday, December 18, 1982, 2-4 p.m.

Home address: 60 Irwin Rd., Rexdale, ON M9V 2P8

OBITUARIES

AMOS WILLIAM ADEMA

died at birth on November 23, 1982.

"The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21).

Although we never knew him, his presence was felt within us. Amos was loved by all of us and we ache with the loss; but his days were numbered as God had planned, for now he is in the best place of all and we can rejoice in the knowledge of this.

Martin and Tracy Adema; Kimberly, Nathan, Renee and family.

OBITUARIES

On November 27, 1982, the Lord took home our dear sister-in-law,

ANNIE STARING
(nee Arbman)

May her family be comforted with the words of Psalm 73:26: "My flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Dirk & Co Koningen-Staring — Brampton

Jo & Emmy Staring-Mos — Brampton

Dirk & Dina Staring-Breyer — Rexdale

Marinus & Coba Staring-Bette — Peterborough

"I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12).

On November 29, 1982, the Lord took unto himself, his child, our beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather,

JOHANNES VAN EGMOND

at the age of 87 years.

Predeceased by his wife Lydia Johanna de Vries, a daughter Gre Kralt and two grandchildren.

His children:

Wim & Gre Van Egmond — St. Catharines

Gerry & Gys Vander Perk — Niagara-on-the-Lake

Geerlof Kralt — Beamsville

Piet & Jenny Van Egmond — Mississauga

Annie & Dick Voors — Oshawa

Reel & Biny Van Egmond — St. Catharines

Also survived by 25 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, December 1, 1982, in the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church of St. Catharines, Ont.

Called home to be with his Lord and Saviour on November 30, 1982,

CORNELIUS VAN GEEST

in his 82nd year.

Beloved husband of Magdalena Van Geest (nee Koene).

Dear father of:

Will & Clarence Van der hout — Grimsby

Art & Joyce Van Geest — Grimsby

Coby & Arie Voskamp — Millgrove

Engel & Tena Van Geest — Listowel

Cor & Barbara Van Geest — Grimsby

Leny & Hank Nyland — Millgrove

Gerda & Harmen VanderMeulen — Sarnia

34 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Survived by 4 sisters and 1 brother in The Netherlands.

"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

BUSINESS

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Female college graduate seeks employment in the St. Catharines area; willing to do anything. Call Grace: (416) 684-0363.

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to catalogue our system of files and legal precedents and to assist in the real estate department. Accurate typing and spelling are essential. Shorthand, proficiency in the Dutch language and experience in legal work and word processing are assets. Working hours are flexible. The position has potential for future full-time employment.

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Please send applications and resume to:

Morris Schenk, Chairman of the Education Committee
588 Bridgen Side Road, Sarnia, ON N7T 7H3
(519) 337-2605

LUCKNOW: A grade 1-3 teacher is required for the Lucknow and District Christian School from March 1 - June 1, 1983. Please apply in writing or phone: H. Janssen, Principal, Box 550, Lucknow, ON N0G 2H0; phone: (519) 528-2016.

WOODSTOCK: We are inviting applications for a classroom teacher in the primary division. Training in special education will be a definite asset. Duties to commence January, 1983. Please send application and resume to: R. Vanderploeg, Principal, John Knox Christian School, 800 Juliana Dr., Woodstock, ON N4S 7W3; phone: (519) 539-1492.

SASKATCHEWAN: The Saskatoon Society for Christian Education invites applications from experienced persons to fill challenging positions as principal-teacher and teacher in our new inter-denominational Christian School; grades K through 8, scheduled to open September, 1983.

Send applications to: Mrs. G. Hogeterp, 2325 Herman Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7M 0N5; phone: (306) 652-4655.

BELLEVILLE: Belleville District Christian School invites applications for a teaching-principal position, with duties commencing the 1983/84 school year. Please send application and resume to: Ben Van Huizen, R.R.#5, Belleville, ON K8N 4Z5; phone: (613) 966-2297.

CALGARY: Calgary Christian School solicits applications for the position of principal commencing the school year 1983/84. Our current enrollment is approximately 450 students in grades K-12. Please write to: The Board of Directors, Calgary Christian School, 2839-49th St., S.W., Calgary, AB T3E 3X9, Att'n: Mr. N. Ross.

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Calvin College
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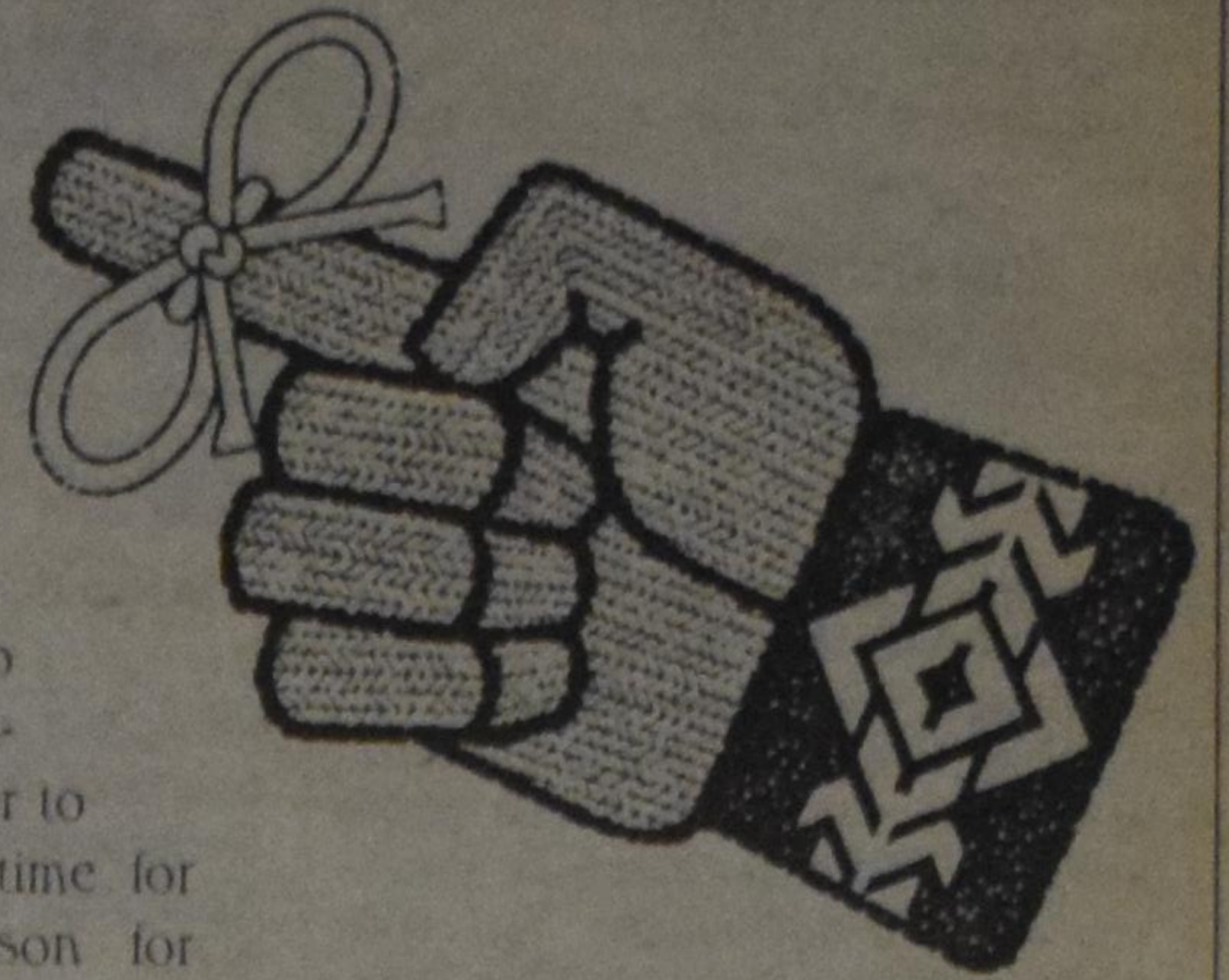
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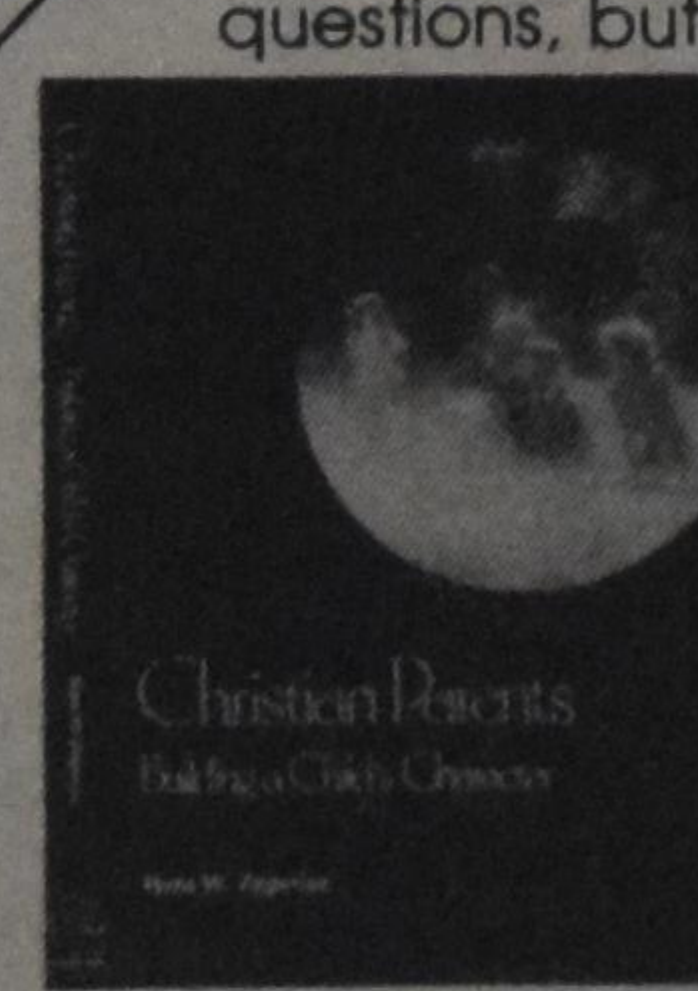
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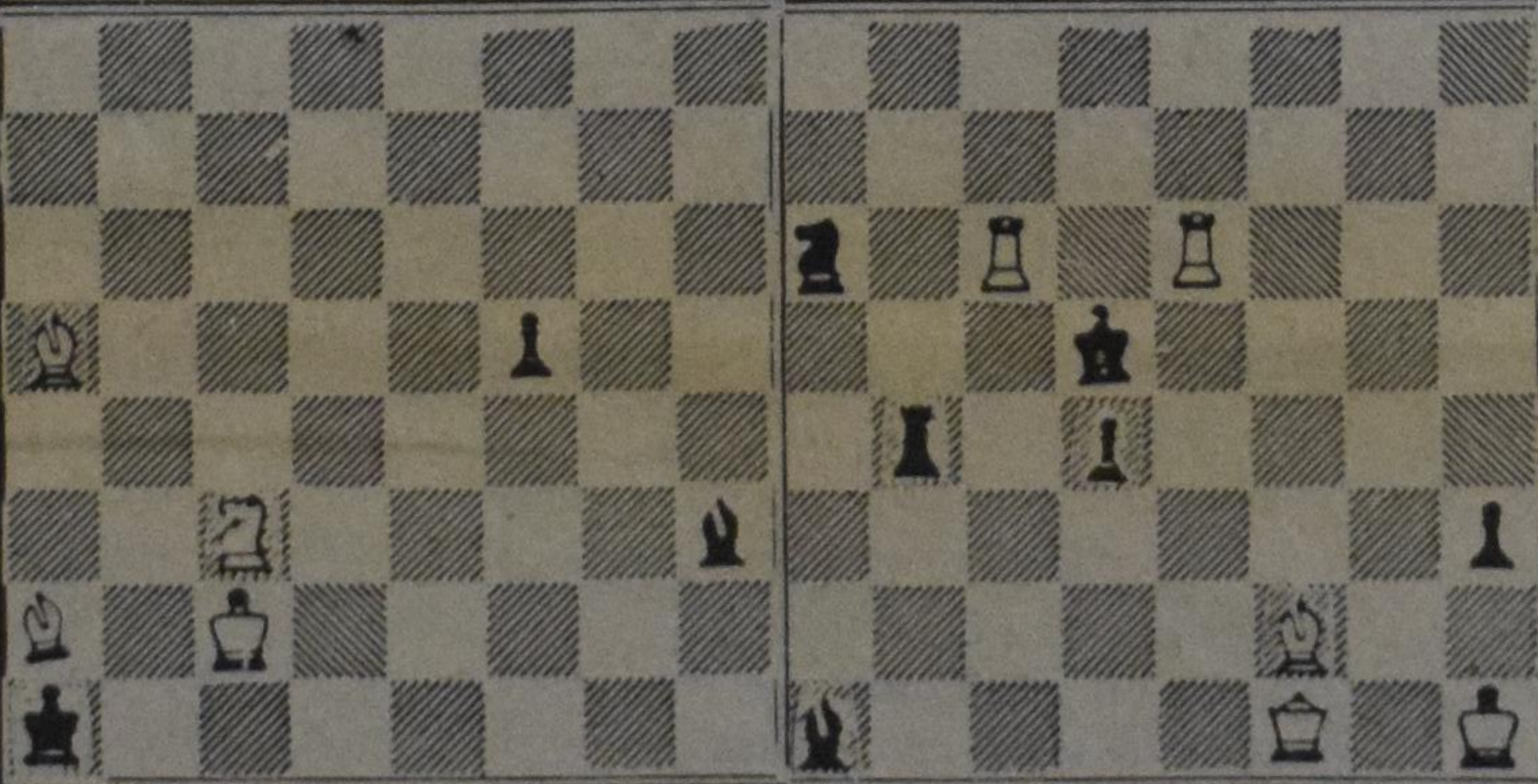
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Editor: Pete Layer
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3 6

4 5
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1. A popular theme in problems concerns the opening or closing of lines controlled by Bishops and Rooks. You will find plenty of that in these two problems.
2. Please give the key, threat and all variations for #942 and the key and threat, if any, for #943.
3. The deadline for #940-943 is: Jan. 20 with an Ontario postmark
Jan. 30 with a B.C. postmark
Jan. 25 for all others
Correction:
#939 (Swane) add a black pawn on KN3 (g6). Thank you, Mr. Asinga.

CHARITABLE REGISTRATION NUMBERS and LEGAL NAME DIRECTORY
of all causes relevant to the Reformed community in Canada will be published in late December (excluding Chr. day schools and individual congregations).
If your organization has not received an invitation for a listing, contact:
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Calendar of events
Dec. 2,3,4 & 9,10,11 Performance of "Soldiers of the Veld," a play about South Africa, written and performed by Tony Russell under the auspices of Ezekiel's Wheel. Place: 740 Bathurst St., Toronto (one block south of Bloor) at 8 p.m. Tickets at the door. (Tel. 466-0064).
Dec. 11 Christian Choir and Organ concert by the 120 voice Christian mixed choir "Praise the Lord" and Brass Quintet of Toronto; Andre Knevel organist, Leendert Kooij director. Saturday at 8:15 p.m., in the Covenant Chr. Ref. Church, 278 Parnell Rd., St. Catharines; admission at the door.
Dec. 12 Sunday, The Laudate Dominum Choir of Chatham will present **Handel's Messiah**. The concert will take place at Park St. United Church of Chatham beginning at 8:00 p.m. Everyone welcome. A free-will offering will be held.
Dec. 16 Combined Christmas presentation of Calvin Chr. School (Hamilton) and H.D.C.H. at Mohawk College, Hamilton; 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 18 Candlelight service with the Ambassador Male Chorus; First Chr. Ref. Church, Hamilton at 7 p.m.
Dec. 18 Christmas Concert in the Rehoboth Chr. Ref. Church, Scugog St. in Bowmanville. By the choirs and band of the Ontario Christian Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ.
Dec. 19 The Brampton Chr. Choral Society, "Praise the Lord" presents its Christmas program in the Second Chr. Ref. Church, Steeles W. and McLaughlin Rd. S., Brampton, at 8 p.m.
Dec. 22 Christmas Concert in the Willowdale United Church, behind the Northtown Plaza in Willowdale. By the choirs and brass of the Ontario Christian Music Assembly under the direction of Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ.
Evening of Reflections and Joy with Herman deJong, Salem Development Director will be held at the following places:
Dec. 7, Smithville Chr. Ref. Church at 8:00; Dec. 9, Ingersoll, CRC at 8:00; Dec. 13, Cambridge, Maranatha CRC at 8:00.
The Canadian Home Bible League: Van Polen Multi-Media presentations; Dec. 5, Oshawa; Dec. 31, Guelph; Jan. 16, Burlington; Jan. 19, Stouffville; Jan. 23, Hamilton; Feb. 20, Galt; Feb. 27, Toronto; Mar. 6, Ottawa; Mar. 27, Willowdale.
CPJ 1982 Regional Annual Meetings:
Terrace: December 21, 1982. Contact Harry Kruisselbrink, (604) 847-3638.
Next Issue

Dated	Mailed	Deadline for classified ads	Deadline for other advertising
Fri. Dec. 10	Wed. Dec. 8	Fri. Dec. 3-10 a.m.	Wed. Dec. 1-noon
Fri. Dec. 17	Wed. Dec. 15	Fri. Dec. 10-10 a.m.	Wed. Dec. 8-noon
Fri. Dec. 24	Mon. Dec. 17	Thurs. Dec. 16-noon	Tues. Dec. 14-4 p.m.

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Christmas

A little boy was born
and placed on straw and hay.
The world did not take notice,
't was just another day.
The baby was not different
from others people knew;
He smiled, he cried, he hungered
as all small babies do.
But different was that shepherds,
doing their nightly chore,
heard choirs of angels singing
a song not heard before.
The shepherds wondered, frightened,
what this great choir was for,
till joyful angels told them,
"Your Saviour has been born."
"Glory to God Almighty,
who your Messiah sent;
deliverer of sinners,
and to the lost a friend.
"You'll find the little baby
in David's Bethlehem,
wrapped up in swaddling clothes,
God's Son, His Holy Lamb."
The shepherds ran to see it,
and found as had been told.
With Mary and with Joseph
they praised God manifold.
His parents called Him Jesus
on order of the Lord,
since He would be Redeemer
to all who trust His Word.
When he was in his boyhood,
He played with foe and friend,
and showed a love and kindness
that's hard to understand.
He grew in length and wisdom,
and soon one wondered how
a boy of twelve had knowledge
a boy could hardly know.
He worked with saw and chisel,
helped father in the store.
He always was obedient,
and never was a bore.
Then, at the age of thirty,
He finally showed the crowd
that He was born a Saviour:
God-man, without a fault.
Regretfully, the people
could then not understand
that He was God and human,

and what His sending meant.

After three years of wonders:
of raising of the dead,
of curing lame and leper,
encouraging the sad,
the leaders could not stand Him;
they did not want a King
who called himself a servant
and pointed out their sin.
Thus falsely they accused Him
of blasphemy and lie;
they put Him on a wooden cross
and wanted Him to die.
But heavy boulders could not
keep Jesus in the grave.
He rose after He mastered
both Satan and his race.
He went up into heaven
after He blessed His friends,
spreading His arms above them
showing His nail-scarred hands.
He promised not to leave them,
they would not stay alone;
Soon they would see descending
God's Spirit from His Throne.
And just as Jesus told them,
the Comforter did come,
Who changed the hearts of millions
to save them from man's doom.
Some day the end is coming,
and though we don't know when,
God's Word gives us a warning,
to be prepared by then.
Soon Jesus will return here
to take them far above
who here on earth had loved Him
and showed their heav'nly love.
They will be singing always
before the throne of God,
Who sent His Son, our Saviour,
to bring our death to naught.
How can we ever thank Him
for such an endless mirth?
which only could have happened
as Jesus came to earth.
To suffer from the cradle
up to the Roman cross!
How great a love must God have,
Who did this all for us.

**Fred Knetsch,
Stratford, Ontario**

A GENTILE AT THE MANGER

Continued from page 12

where a tiny light was flickering. Their sudden appearance awakened others.

Calpurnius stood with other curious onlookers at the entrance to the stall with the little flickering light and in amazement watched the scene of the shepherds bowing and kneeling down for a little child lying in a manger, just as he had heard it from the mouth of the angels. The manger was rough and its edges were worn and the child wore swaddling clothes and to the swaddling clothes stuck a few downy grass seeds. And the little light shone over the happy faces of the child's parents and the shadows of the shepherds played against the wall.

Calpurnius was amazed when he realized that to the smallest detail things had been as the angels had announced.

...

The shepherds returned to their fields and are heard of no more, but their faith can only have persisted for they had seen the young Messiah and his angels. We have also lost sight of Calpurnius, the friend of the Jewish shepherds and co-witness to the happenings in and around Bethlehem on that important morning.

Perhaps Calpurnius was the first Gentile to lay eyes on the Saviour of

mankind, when he looked over the shoulders of the shepherds. We know that in the history of the subsequent growth and expansion of Christianity. Roman soldiers and officers played an important role. The Almighty destined it that way. When exactly Roman legionnaires became first involved in ongoing victorious advance of Christianity is not known. Perhaps it was when soldiers sought the spiritual counsel of John the Baptist; perhaps it was even earlier, at Jesus' birth already, when a Calpurnius marvelled with the shepherds at the birth of the Messiah.

Jesus was a Saviour to all who believed, Calpurnius not excluded. And although the shepherds of Ephrata must remain nameless and the first Roman soldier touched by the message of the coming Messiah must likewise remain in the shadows and unknown, we have called him Calpurnius and endeavour to give an admittedly imperfect picture of the most momentous day of his life, when angels sang of the birth of the Saviour and Calpurnius himself was allowed a glimpse of a King, greater than all the Caesars of Rome.

John Martens is a freelance writer and history buff living in Listowel, Ontario